

Wes Dalton



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

D165i

v. 1

cop. 2

THE
INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“CHARTLEY THE FATALIST,” “THE ROBBER,”
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I

LONDON:
EDWARD BULL, HOLLES STREET.

1833.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

823
B1652
V. 1
cap. 2

THE INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN.

CHAPTER I.

EVERY body pronounced Bernard Audrey to be the most fortunate of all fortunate young fellows. He had passed creditably through the time, oddly enough called "his studies," at Oxford, and had as many tufts and wealthy commoners on his list of intimates and acquaintances, as any man need wish to begin life with. The only reason why he did not take honours was, they said, because he did not choose to try for them; and so he stood much higher, as a scholar, than he would have done, if he had made the attempt, and been baffled by one of those untalked-about men who every now and then are seen to emerge from their holes and

corners, and set every body staring, while they thread the tangled maze, and carry off the prize, even as that operative mathematician the spider seizes and bears away the plump young fly.

Bernard had a rich old uncle likewise, a most valuable East Indian relation, whom the constant attendance of a physician alone seemed to prevent from making his exit into another world. But Bernard was not dependent upon him, having a very pretty fortune of his own, left to accumulate, in consequence of the death of both his parents, when he was too young to feel the loss. Added to all this, the Audrey family was one of great antiquity and respectability, and he was the only son of the elder branch; so that if a long-dormant baronetcy could be recovered, he would forthwith be Sir Bernard. And of the revival of this ancestral title there was now every probability, inasmuch as the aforesaid old uncle had set his mind upon it, and, in anticipation of success, had purchased the ruinous old hall of Audrey, in Northamptonshire, with the estate belonging

to it. The old gentleman had, moreover, accepted the honour of knighthood, thinking that his appearance in the country as Sir William, would be more in unison with what was to follow, than if he took possession as a mere esquire.

In the mean while, legal and antiquarian researches and inquiries were in full progress, and the lawyers and antiquaries were sanguine, and even positive, respecting ultimate success; since nothing remained but to prove the deaths of a few individuals, the youngest of whom, if living, must then have been one hundred and ninety seven years of age.

Such was the state of affairs when it wanted but a week to the day on which Bernard would be of age; and Sir William had resolved that that day should be commemorated, in the true old English style, at Audrey Hall. Therefore, he and his nephew went down to see that all fitting preparations were made, (according to orders previously given,) and to preside on the jovial occasion.

As it was in the month of August, there was no necessity for making use of the interior

of the building for the accommodation of their guests, and the few rooms which were habitable, sufficed for their own comfort.

Long tables, with awnings, tastefully festooned, after the manner of the East, were erected in the park; two barn-floors were laid down for the dancers, and likewise covered with awnings, that the capricious climate should not destroy the festivity of the day. Then there were separate tents for refreshment, and others for select parties; and orchestras, of pagoda form, for the musicians; and the whole was arranged in such a manner, as caused the fame of it to go forth, and be the topic of general conversation and wonder for twenty miles round, among all classes of people; and, what was still better, all seemed delighted, for *all* were invited.

If ever a contempt for the advantages of birth and the pride of ancestry can exist in the minds of those who have a claim to it, this certainly is not common in the spring of life; and Bernard Audrey had it not. He roamed through the old park, where the neglected thorns, of a century's growth, had hardened

and knotted themselves into picturesque wildness and beauty; while here and there an aged oak reared its head majestically, and waved its branches in the upper air, as though to welcome the returning descendant of those who had cherished it when a sapling. There were noseless monuments too in the little church, and portions of painted glass in its windows, as well as in those at the hall, which told Bernard that the old people had been "somebodies" in their generation; and he respected himself accordingly.

On the arrival of the important day, it was ushered in by the ringing of bells; and, soon after breakfast, a deputation from the corporation of a neighbouring town came with an address of congratulation to our hero, worded, as the worthy mayor said, precisely in the same manner as that which one of his predecessors in office had brought up, on a similar occasion, to the same spot, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when, it was stated in the records of the borough, the deputation "disported themselves in the park until the hour of dinner, after which

they tarried until the evening, because of certain sports and pastimes enacted by the young and thoughtless; and then, when Phœbus withdrew his beams," they returned home with all becoming gravity, though "righte merye" withal, from the abounding excellence of their entertainment.

The worthy burghers were thanked, in due form, by both the gentlemen, and requested to remain and disport themselves according to the laudable example of their predecessors.

As the day advanced, groups of peasantry, in their Sunday suits, were seen entering the park. Old men with their wives, and young men and maidens, arm in arm, approached the long deserted hall, the chimneys of which now sent forth cheerful clouds of preparation. Anon came gigs, taxed-carts, and even waggons, bedecked with boughs of laurel, through which glistening eyes and laughing faces were ever peeping. These were followed by more aristocratic vehicles, open landaus, barouches, family coaches, chariots, phaetons, curricles, and denets, in which might be seen, as they swept

along over the greensward, huge silk and straw-bonnets, betokening that certain of the belles of the county were concealed beneath.

These were pleasant indications to Bernard, and he and Sir William immediately sallied forth to say as many agreeable things, or rather nothings, as they could think of. But as they descended the steps of the hall, the old knight gave a friendly piece of advice, in the following terms, to the young baronet that was to be.

“Now mind, Bernard,” said he, “and don’t make a fool of yourself, by paying too much attention to anybody whom nobody knows ; for if ever you marry a girl without money, I’ll cut you off with a shilling. Take your cue from me. There’s my very worthy friend, the Reverend Mr. Kenemall, who has kindly undertaken to be a sort of master of the ceremonies on this occasion, so let us speak to him first, and then, afterwards, whenever you want to know who’s who, ask him and he can tell you.”

The reverend gentleman performed his part most admirably, pronouncing the most important names with a clear, sonorous, and audible

voice ; enouncing those of lesser moment with a placid calmness, and almost denouncing the remainder, by the hurried and indistinct manner in which he contrived to steer between undue civility and direct rudeness.

During the process of introduction, the knight and the heir “ bowed and grinned, bowed and grinned, and bowed and grinned again,” and avowed that they felt themselves “ highly honoured,” and “ highly delighted,” and so forth, all in the regular way : and then the several parties dispersed themselves about the grounds, each as seemed good in their own eyes ; and very shortly after, the old dinner-bell of the hall swang, creaking, to and fro, and with rusty iron tongue summoned the rustics to dinner.

The village musicians attempted “ *Non nobis*,” but it was a failure, for want of the church organ, with which they had previously practised, and so the Reverend Mr. Kenemall said a grace, which answered the purpose quite as well, and forthwith the guests began to attack what was before them with a vigour and keen-

ness of appetite which excited the envy of more than one of those whose custom it was “to fare sumptuously every day;” and we are sorry to say that Sir William himself was of that number.

When the “nobility, gentry, and clergy” had satisfied themselves with looking on, they again took a turn or two to admire or to criticise the arrangements made for their reception, and guess at the probable amount that the old knight would leave behind him on his exit, an event which they all agreed must soon occur. And, perhaps, that was the only subject upon which all opinions did agree, though the ladies declared that the heir was certainly a very fine young man.

These matters being decided upon, their dinner hour likewise arrived, and the splendid entertainment was served in a most spacious and magnificent marquee; but it would be somewhat irksome to enter into particulars, and, moreover, it is not necessary for our purpose; therefore, be it understood, that all went off well, and our young hero made himself exces-

sively agreeable to the ladies who happened to be near him, more especially to one elderly dame, who had a very handsome daughter.

Now this lady and her spouse were among the number of individuals over whose names the Reverend Mr. Kenemall had passed with such extreme volubility, and consequently Sir William was anxious to learn something more about them ; but all that his clerical friend knew was, that Mr. Storer had recently purchased a small estate in the neighbourhood, about ten miles off, and he believed was, or had been a merchant, or something of that kind, in London. He had called upon him, he added, some weeks since, but his call had not yet been returned. This was very unsatisfactory ; but the old knight, when once he took a matter in hand, was not easily to be baffled ; and, as it was a favourite maxim with him always to go to the fountain-head at once, if possible, he resolved to take the first opportunity of speaking to the said Mr. Storer himself.

But the said Mr. Storer, as if intentionally playing at cross purposes, got wedged in with

a party of jovial fellows, who sat long over the bottle after the steadier part of the company had taken their departure from the marquee. In the mean while, young Bernard, on whom the implied interdiction of Mr. Kenemall had not been lost, most perversely continued his particular attentions towards Mrs. Storer and her fair daughter Alicia, not liking the fair blossom before him a whit the less because it promised to ripen into forbidden fruit ; but, perhaps, on the contrary, feeling more keenly alive to present enjoyment on that very account.

When, at length, the old knight saw them dancing together, he became outrageous, and took a sly opportunity of throwing an angry glance at his nephew, which the latter but too well understood, and therefore resolved, as soon as he could, with propriety, to transfer his attentions, for a time, to some other fair one ; for, on reflection, it struck him, that on such an occasion, when he was, as it were, the host of the day, he might have appeared not quite sufficiently general in paying his devoirs. Besides, independently of all pecuniary considerations,

he would not willingly give his worthy uncle any unnecessary vexation.

Such was his laudable resolution during the remainder of the dance, which was somewhat lengthy; and at its termination, as Miss Alicia Storer felt herself rather faint, he contrived to persuade her that a short walk, of only a few yards, in the open air, would be by far the most efficacious of all possible remedies.

They had not proceeded half a dozen steps from the entrance of the temporary saloon, when they saw, by the clear moonlight, two gentlemen coming towards them from the marquee, apparently engaged in high words.

“That is my father!” exclaimed Miss Alicia; “he has taken too much wine, I know, by his manner of speaking. Do let us get out of his way?”

“And the other is my uncle, I’ll swear,” thought Bernard; “and he hasn’t taken wine enough.”

So, without farther ceremony, he whisked his fair companion round the corner of the building, and took that opportunity of whispering some

soft nonsense into her not unwilling ear ; after which, as her faintness had departed, they joined the company, and she was delivered safe into the charge of her mamma ; who, having observed the rocky state of her papa, immediately ordered their carriage, which was announced while our hero was in the middle of a set of quadrilles, with a set of “frights,” and so there was no leave-taking.

As his uncle, very judiciously, retired to rest at an hour when the thorough-going votaries of Terpsichore were “just beginning to enjoy themselves,” Bernard was left without any check upon his conduct ; and perhaps on that very account, evinced so much tact, and was so general and graceful in his polite attentions to the assembled fair, as almost to compensate for his exclusiveness in the former part of the evening.

The dancing and merriment continued till

“ Like a boil'd lobster, now, the morn,
From black to red began to turn.”

And then the wheels were in requisition ; and

the yawning servants shook themselves from their unquiet and dog-like slumbers. Bernard handed his last partner to her carriage; and then, as he looked at the moon, fading away in the heavens as if declining to enter into competition with Aurora, he felt half disposed to be poetical; but it had been a busy day, and he had slept but little the night before, and so his ideas became exceedingly confused and unmanageable, and he sought his pillow, which, immediately he laid his head upon it, seemed to be jiggling him to sleep by a medley of merry squeaking tunes, as though it were stuffed with tiny fiddlers, catgut, and resin.

In the morning, he prepared himself for a lecture; but the good old knight was in somewhat gayer mood than ordinary, and made no allusion to the Storers.

“ Well, my dear fellow,” said he, “ all went off well; and I have made up my mind to stay here at least a week. But you are your own master; and though I shall be glad to have your company, yet, if you find yourself dull, don’t mind me, for my time will be filled up in

arranging plans for the improvement of the estate, which will be quite a different sort of place in a few years."

Bernard declared that nothing would give him greater pleasure than rendering any assistance in his power ; and, moreover, that he had a great desire to see something more of the surrounding country.

Sir William said that nothing could be more natural. "Our ancestors," he continued, "hunted and hawked here ; and practised good old English hospitality, as I learnt from some of the old country people yesterday, quite in baronial style. And you shall be able to do the same, Bernard, as soon as ever this affair of the title is settled ; that is, mind me, if you don't make a fool of yourself by marrying some poor girl. Choice enough, choice enough, Sir. What do you think of the Honourable Misses Dashfort ? Fine girl the eldest—steps like a queen, eh ? A seat in Parliament at once through that interest. You danced with her of course ?"

Bernard thought himself happy in being able to answer in the affirmative ; and they talked

of divers other ladies with whom he had likewise danced ; having been, as before hinted, extremely assiduous after the departure of the Storsers, whose name, to his great surprise, was not mentioned by his uncle.

Calls from gentlemen so entirely filled up that day, that it was impossible to ride out in any reasonable time ; but on the following morning, Bernard mounted his horse soon after breakfast, with the avowed purpose of seeing the country.

It was about two o'clock when he found himself on an eminence which commanded a lovely sweeping valley, well wooded, and watered by a small river, the devious and irregular windings of which glistened here and there in the sunbeams. Now, although Bernard had been poring over a huge map of the county on the preceding evening, he felt obliged to inquire of his country servant, what the name of a snug little estate, which occupied the major part of this valley, might happen to be ; and the man's reply was " Maxdean." " Who lives there ?" he then asked.

“It now belongs to a Lunnuner,” said his informant, “one Squire Storer, as they call him—but he hasn’t been there long;—in former days, it used to make part of your own family estate, because part of the land runs round that hill, just as the river runs; and so the old Audreys used to have all the narrow steep pretty near along the two valleys; and the Dashforts had the higher ground on this side; and different people that’s all gone and forgotten, had what is on the other.”

Our hero looked at his watch, hesitated, walked his horse forward, stopped, and appeared to admire the prospect.

“There’s the old gentleman that belongs to the estate,” exclaimed the servant: “He’s just going out—do you see, Sir, in that low phaeton, with a man in a light blue livery driving him. There, they have now gone under those large elms: that’s where the entrance-gate is.”

Bernard remained where he was, and saw the old gentleman driven along the high road through the valley, till the low phaeton had fairly turned the corner; and then he very soon

found himself at the door of Maxdean Hall, inquiring for Mr. Storer, and regretting exceedingly that he happened not to be at home. "But, perhaps," said he, "Mrs. Storer may be within?"

His card was duly delivered, and met with a favourable reception. He was ushered into an elegantly-furnished little drawing-room, where he waited not long ere the lady of the house made her appearance, and bade him welcome with a heartiness and good-humour which were quite refreshing. He thought he had never seen so comely and comfortable a middle-aged dame; and after expressing his delight at seeing her looking so well, he ventured to hope that Miss Storer had not taken cold from a partial exposure to the night air; and even hinted that he ought to have called yesterday, but was prevented by numerous visitors.

"Pray, don't mention it," said Mrs. Storer; "we are not ceremonious people, I assure you: and though we should be sorry to hurt the feelings of any one, we wish our neighbours to understand that we are not so: — we shall al-

ways be glad to see you at any time. Perhaps Mr. Storer ought to have called on you and Sir William yesterday ; indeed, he fancies that he recollects promising something of the kind, but he was not able to stir out during the day : the fatigue he underwent the preceding night was somewhat too much for him" — (here a good-humoured smile was apparent.) " Alicia, however, is quite well, and will, I am sure, feel pleased to have an opportunity of thanking you for your polite attention."

She then rang the bell, and desired a servant to make the necessary announcement ; in consequence of which Miss Storer soon made her appearance, and Bernard thought that she looked more lovely in her plain white morning dress, than when arrayed and "harnessed" for the ball-room.

What else passed on this occasion was too much like every-day matters to be worth relating ; but it was a somewhat longer morning-call than the strict rules of etiquette demand, on the first performance of that ceremony, and altogether appeared far from tedious to the parties engaged in it.

“ You will probably meet my husband on your return home,” said the elder lady ; “ he went out with the intention of calling on you and Sir William.”

This anticipated meeting took place about half-way between the two halls. Mr. Storer was, like his spouse, a comfortable-looking personage. Both were inclined to stoutness, but he somewhat in the greater degree ; and moreover, a rubicund tint on his countenance seemed to indicate that he was not in the habit of debarring himself from the moderate enjoyment of such gratifications as were congenial with his taste. The two-wheeled phaeton was arrested in its course, and he shook hands warmly with our hero.

“ Just been to call upon you,” said he : “ saw Sir William—doesn’t look well—but hope our country air will set him up again. Shocking place, India !—kill the devil ! Well, how do you like this part of the world ?”

Bernard expressed his delight at all he had seen, and mentioned from whence he then came. There was an evident expression of pleasure in the eyes of the hearer, who replied—

“That’s odd enough — I one way, you the other. Well, well, all’s right ; so now I shall consider my call as returned, and then there’s an end of all your confounded ceremony. When will you come and dine with me?—just in a family way. No use to ask Sir William ; tells me he never dines out. Capital Madeira that of his. Took too much the other day, drinking your health. Can give you pretty near as good, though. Well, if you won’t fix a day, remember we always dine at five—punctual—sit down as the clock strikes. Glad to see you any day ; wouldn’t say so otherwise, you may depend upon it.”

Bernard declared that he equally disliked ceremony, and promised to take the earliest opportunity of looking-in in a family way. They then again cordially shook hands, and separated.

Sir William mentioned at dinner the names of several persons who had called, but said not a word of Mr. Storer, who our hero consequently judged was considered as nobody, and felt not a little perplexed.

The next two days were spent in returning the calls of their neighbours, looking over the estate and plans for its improvement; and on the third, Bernard said that he should take a long ride, and perhaps not be back till the evening.

“That’s right, my dear fellow,” said Sir William; “Go about—see every thing you can. Never mind me, I am sufficiently occupied at present, so as scarcely to miss your society.”

There was nobody at Maxdean Hall that day but the family, when the new clock on the old turret indicated that it wanted five minutes to five; but when that hour was announced, four persons entered the dining-room.

“This is just what I like,” said Mr. Storer. “I make no apology—never do. If a young fellow can’t make a good dinner off fish and soup, and plain roast and boiled, I ’m sorry for him, that’s all. Got a good appetite, I hope—nothing comes amiss then:—fine day for riding—how do you like Northamptonshire?”

Bernard praised the country, and highly ap-

proved of everything before him ; and moreover, felt somewhat puzzled how to reconcile the style in which the family dinner was served, with his previous notion that the Storer's were classed among the nobodies ; but as that was a subject on which no immediate decision appeared necessary, he postponed its consideration, and resolved to enjoy the present moment.

The first consequence of this visit was the establishment of a quite-at-home sort of feeling between all parties ; and his subsequent calls were frequent during his stay in the country, which was extended by Sir William's engagements, till no less than three weeks had elapsed : and then, one morning at breakfast, the uncle abruptly told his nephew that he should be off on the following day, and hoped to have the pleasure of his company.

“ To speak the truth,” continued the knight, “ I could be very well content to spend a few more weeks here, if our establishment was properly arranged ; but it is impossible, as things are, to receive the only few families with which we can associate, in a manner suitable to the

THE INVISIBLE GENTLEMAN.

rank which you will in future hold in the county.

Next year all will be right, but in the mean while, my dear fellow, you must look out for a wife. I should like to see you well married. You don't appear to be smitten with any of the belles hereabouts. Indeed I am not surprised at that, for, with the exception of the Dashforts, there's really nobody worth mentioning. The rest are all very well to make up a party, or fill a ball-room, and some even to visit occasionally : but, for anything further—" and he finished the sentence by an expressive shrug of the shoulders, which was exceedingly unpleasant to our hero, who had made such use of time and opportunity, as now to be desperately in love with the fair Alicia. He was almost on the point of making this confession, when he reflected that it might be done quite as well on the morrow, during their journey to London, and silence, in the mean while, would afford him an opportunity of saying farewell to his friends at Maxdean Hall.

His ride to that delightful spot was somewhat

more dull than usual, and, as he was walking round the shrubbery with Alicia, she could not avoid remarking his fits of absence and lowness of spirits. The reason was soon disclosed ; it was the thought of separation, the dread lest, in his absence, some other might become the chosen partner of her walks, and so on, and the whole terminated by a passionate declaration that, unless she consented to become his companion for life, he should never know what happiness meant.

Alicia neither shrieked nor fainted ; but thanked him for the very high opinion he entertained of her ; really knew not what answer to make ; and, upon being further pressed, utterly denied having formed any previous attachment, and, when pressed still harder, acknowledged that the affair was one of such great importance that she could not venture to speak upon it ; and then, after a little more pressure, she very dutifully referred her overjoyed lover to her parents.

Mr. Storer listened to our hero's tale with an unusual appearance of gravity, and then said,

“Hem, hem, ahem! no such thing as young people’s meeting together in a friendly way without something of this sort! Don’t know what to say to it. Respect you, can’t do otherwise, no fault to find, all very natural, but Sir William? What does he think, eh? East Indians cursed proud; don’t like the name of trade. I glory in it. Got my money so, perhaps *you* didn’t know that? Don’t mean to say I can give Ally much though, mind *that!* some little matter perhaps.”

Bernard, avowed himself to be perfectly disinterested, and stated, that even his uncle’s disapprobation would make no change in his sentiments or conduct.

Little more conversation was necessary to make all smooth; and then the precise hour of dinner arrived, when each of the old people ate more than both the young ones. A tender separation, interspersed with vows, sighs, promises, hand-squeezings, &c. &c. closed this eventful day.

CHAPTER II.

“Do you know whose snug little place that is to the left?” asked Sir William, as his travelling chariot bowled merrily along the winding road through the valley.

“It is called Maxdean Hall,” replied Bernard, “and belongs to a gentleman of the name of Storer.”

“Humph!” quoth the knight, “Squire Storer *now*, I suppose? I remember the name, a grocer, or something of that sort, from London. Grounds well laid out though; that opening and sunk fence is not bad; but the little mound and temple are too much like a sugar-loaf.”

“You must be under some mistake, Sir,” observed Bernard, “Mr. Storer certainly has never been a grocer. His manners and style of living,

though plain, are perfectly those of a gentleman."

"Eh! What? Then you have visited him?" exclaimed Sir William.

Bernard replied that he had called several times.

"Humph! very strange! I never heard you mention the name," continued the knight; "you should be very careful. I hope you have not become *too* intimate."

The nephew thought the time for confession was now arrived, and, summoning all his courage, said, "I took a family dinner with them yesterday, and—"

"Family dinner!" cried Sir William, interrupting him, "Got so far as that, eh? Well, then I must call likewise, I suppose, so, just order the postilions to drive up to the door. The grounds appear to be very tastily managed; and perhaps I may borrow a hint for our own improvements. There's no need of any introduction; for now I recollect that the grocer called upon me."

Bernard gave the necessary directions, and

then observed, "I assure you, Sir William, he is not a grocer."

"Phoo, phoo," said the knight, "no matter what, a tailor perhaps; but we've no business to know anything about such matters. He's a Squire here, and that's enough for the *present*. If we find it necessary to cut him afterwards, we can. A good front to the house, however! Verandah perfectly correct, a London architect, I presume."

While Sir William went on with his remarks, as they drove along the sweeping road leading to the hall, Bernard endeavoured to prepare for the coming scene, in which he resolved to conduct himself manfully, and, if it were necessary, to sacrifice all for love.

Just as the carriage reached the door, Sir William, as if suddenly recollecting himself, turned sharply round, and said, "By the by, he's got a daughter, now I remember; but, phoo, phoo, no, I am sure I need not have any fears on that account. No, no, an Audrey could never forget himself so far as to think of a grocer's daughter!"

There was no time for reply, as their servants had descended from their seats at the back of the carriage, and opened the door, while that of the hall was likewise open for their reception, and a servant out of livery answered the inquiry of Sir William, by stating, without hesitation, that his master was at home; and scarcely were the words out of his mouth, ere Mr. Storer himself made his appearance, and shaking hands familiarly with both Sir William and his nephew, bade them heartily welcome.

“Glad to see you, Sir William,” he continued; “thought you didn’t mean to call; shouldn’t have been offended if you hadn’t; nephew has though—dined with us, all in the family way—hope you’ll do the same to-day—don’t know what we’ve got—don’t care—come, walk in.”

The old knight appeared to his nephew to be somewhat more than usually stiff and formal, but suffered himself to be conducted into the house; and they were soon seated in the little drawing-room, though not before the lover had contrived to pull their host by the sleeve, and

whisper that his uncle was yet in ignorance relative to the affair of the preceding day.

“ You are pleasantly situated here, Mister ——,” observed Sir William, in his most dignified style of condescension.

“ Yes,” replied Mr. Storer ; “ snug little box enough. Does very well for three of us ; don’t see much company—don’t want ’em ; like snug family parties—that ’s my taste, eh, Sir William. What say you ?”

“ Why,” replied the knight distantly, “ I think every man ought to know what accords with his own taste, and cannot be blamed for pursuing such habits and pleasures as he has been accustomed to.”

“ Very true, very true,” resumed Mr. Storer ; “ never was used to much form and ceremony, so don’t like it : good reason that, eh, Sir William ? Hard work to bend an old tree ;” and he rose and crossed the room to pull the bell, while the knight cast a glance at his nephew, which, with its accompanying shrug and gesture, plainly said, “ A very pretty sort of

an acquaintance you've picked up in this grocer !”

On the appearance of a servant, Mr. Storer made a well-known sign for refreshments, and added, “ Let the ladies know that Sir William and Mr. Audrey are here.”

The ladies very soon afterwards made their *entré*, and the old knight's attentions were according to the most frigid politeness of the old school, while poor Bernard sat upon thorns, and scarcely knew what to say or which way to look. The invitation to stop and take a family dinner was repeated by the unceremonious lady, much in the same manner as it had been previously given by her husband ; but Sir William condescended to express his regret that the thing was impossible, as they intended that night to sleep at Woburn. A proposal to walk round the grounds was, however, accepted, and Mr. Storer appeared highly delighted at the task of showing the lions.

“ Mr. Audrey has seen all before,” said he, “ so he may as well stop where he is. You and I can go together, Sir William. No great mat-

ter to show you ; not like what Audrey park and grounds will be, but just pretty, that 's all ; not grand—leave that for your magnificos ; like comfort—This way,” and, opening one of the windows, he conducted his guest out upon a neatly-mown lawn.

During their absence, which lasted nearly an hour, Bernard informed Alicia and her mother of the cause of their visit, and stated his intentions of speaking to his uncle during the progress of their journey ; and when the elder lady thought proper to leave the room, the lovers held some very interesting communications and lamentations concerning “ the course of true love never running smooth ;” for Alicia perceived that Sir William looked upon her family with condescension, and Bernard could not deny that he had some fears ; but, as he was independent of his uncle, he vowed to follow the dictates of his own heart, and forthwith spake of “ love in a cottage,” and other agreeable concomitant matters.

When the elder gentlemen returned, Sir William's stiffness of manner appeared to be greatly

increased. He just tasted a glass of Madeira, at the pressing instance of his host, and then his travelling chariot was ordered to the door. The leave-taking was very formal on his part, and for some time afterwards there was no sound heard but the rumbling of the wheels.

Bernard thought this very ominous, but knew not how to begin a conversation. At length he was startled by Sir William's exclaiming, "A good-looking girl that grocer's daughter! How did you find her? Coarse, I suppose, like her father?"

"Quite the contrary," replied Bernard. "She has been most excellently educated, and her education has not been thrown away. Her accomplishments are adequate to any station in life; and, more than all, she has a most excellent disposition and an affectionate—"

"What in the world are you talking about, Bernard?" ejaculated the knight. "Excellent! affectionate! accomplished! I mean the grocer's daughter whom we have just left. You are thinking of somebody else."

"No, sir," replied the lover; "I mean Miss

Alicia Storer ; and, if we had not called there this morning, it was my intention to have spoken to you on the subject."

"What subject?" asked the uncle, starting as far as possible to his own side of the carriage. "It can't surely be of any consequence either to you or me what accomplishments that girl has got, or whether she has none at all?"

"Pardon me, Sir William," said Bernard, and then he went on to profess much of the gratitude and esteem which he really felt for his uncle, and the extreme sorrow which he should feel in doing anything to offend him, and so forth ; and having thus prefaced the matter, proceeded to the tale of his plighted affection, and the utter impossibility of his ever being happy with any other created being than the aforesaid all-accomplished Alicia.

During this confession, Sir William sat perfectly silent, with his face turned away from the speaker, and apparently engaged in looking out of his own window, so that it was impossible to guess what might be his feelings. When his nephew appeared to have no more to say, he

sunk back in his carriage, and, giving him a stern look, asked if he had done?

“I have nothing more to add,” said Bernard, in the resigned tone of a prisoner expecting his sentence.

“Have you forgotten the baronetcy?” asked Sir William; “and the expectations which you might justly have calculated upon at my death, had you thought fit to follow my advice?”

“I know all the risk I run, sir,” replied Bernard. “The loss of your friendship and esteem will be more difficult to endure than the loss of title or fortune: but my word is plighted, and, were it not, my affection is fixed beyond the possibility of a change. If you knew more of Alicia, Sir William, I am sure—”

“Pshaw—nonsense!” exclaimed the knight. “Don’t tell me about her. You must know enough of me, sir, to be aware that I never change my mind—therefore, the only question is, whether you will change yours? for, if not, I tell you, once for all, you must abide the consequences.”

Bernard’s answer was, (like his previous con-

fession,) somewhat too lengthy to be repeated verbatim; but the substance of it was indicative of great respect for his uncle, and a willingness to be guided by his counsel upon every subject, save the only one on which the said uncle had thought fit to give him any advice. An exposition and dissertation upon Alicia's virtues and accomplishments followed, as a matter of course; and the whole was concluded by a most heroic renunciation of every advantage and prospect which might require an abandonment of the object of his undivided affection.

“Well, sir,” observed Sir William coolly, “such being your determination, I leave you to take your own course, and shall only add that I hope you will not repent when it is too late. For my own part, I shall immediately return to Audrey Hall, to countermand the orders given for the various improvements, and to destroy certain documents, which I, somewhat prematurely, signed the day after you came of age. I have nothing more to say on the subject. You see I take things coolly. You say that your affections are not in your own power—hem! so

it seems; but my property is in mine, that's some consolation. We won't quarrel, sir, for the short time we have to be together. It's not worth while. Perhaps you would like me to set you down at Maxdean Hall; if so, pray make yourself at home; there is plenty of room for us both. Here we are at the end of the stage."

The servants were somewhat astonished at their master's unusual change of purpose, but knew him too well to hazard any remark; and, in a few minutes, they were rapidly retracing their former way.

Bernard was, of course, very dull; but ventured once or twice to recur to the important topic, and on each occasion the old knight turned away and looked out of his window in silence.

It was half-past four o'clock when they re-entered the well-known valley, and the sight of the roof under which his Alicia was, doubtless, then thinking of him, caused no trifling emotion in the breast of her lover: but still the idea of parting, thus suddenly, from his alienated uncle,

was very painful, and he told him so, with a degree of genuine feeling and warmth, which, one would have thought, must have had an effect upon the old gentleman, who, nevertheless, still continued to look out of his window, till they reached the gate of the little park, and then he turned suddenly round, and said, "Well, Bernard—sir—will you give up the girl or not? I ask you now for the last time. Just be pleased to say yes or no."

"Then I must say no, sir," replied Bernard. "But I will yet hope—"

"Phoo, phoo; no more nonsense!" exclaimed Sir William. "We have had enough of that already. I never change my mind, sir. I have told them to drive up to the door, just to save appearances before the servants. You can explain all afterwards."

Mr. Storer was at the door when the carriage stopped, and stepping forward, with a smile of welcome, exclaimed, "Altered your mind, eh? Come to dinner? that's right—glad to see you—take us as we are—nobody else—just the right number."

Sir William being on the farther side of the carriage, now, very much to the surprise of his nephew, by whom alone he was heard, muttered, "There's no dinner prepared at the hall, that's certain, so, like an old soldier, I'll just quarter upon the enemy for once, for this ride has given me an appetite."

They were, as before, ushered into the drawing-room, from whence Bernard, vexed at Mr. Storer's more than usual blunt familiarity and the preposterous stiffness of his uncle, went forth upon the lawn, in hopes of finding somebody more agreeable.

No sooner was his back turned, than Mr. Storer shook Sir William warmly by the hand, and Sir William, laying aside all his stiffness, returned the shake most heartily, and they both gave way to a fit of merriment and self-congratulation, which would very much have astonished poor Bernard, had he beheld them.

In order to account for this apparently inconsistent behaviour on the part of the two elders, it is necessary to go back to the festivities of Audrey on the day when our hero came of age.

The reader will, perhaps, recollect that Sir William, after being much annoyed by his nephew's particular attention to Alicia, resolved to have some talk with her father, and thereby to ascertain what sort of man he was, as the Reverend Mr. Kenemall could give him no satisfactory account. On the knight's appearance in the marquee, Mr. Storer, under the influence of old madeira, had reached that state wherein even the humble care little about the world or the world's opinion; and as the person in question was seldom apt to consult the latter at any time, his self-elevation and feelings of independence were now in proportion. It was not exactly thus with his companions, whom the presence of their host reminded that they were exceeding the bounds usually adopted in good society, and they forthwith broke up their sitting, somewhat abruptly, to the mortification of poor Mr. Storer, who was left alone with Sir William.

“ I am glad to see you enjoy yourself, sir,” said the knight.

“ Thank you, Sir William,” was the reply.

“ This madeira of your’s is excellent. I should recommend you to take a glass.”

“ Perhaps your advice is judicious,” observed the inquisitive knight, taking a seat by the side of his free and easy guest, with a resolution of knowing something about him ere they parted.

“ I have the pleasure of drinking your good health, Mr. Scoresby, I believe? If I am wrong, pray excuse me to-day, as I have really so many new names to remember, that my head is quite bewildered.”

“ Very excusable, Sir William; so is mine a little with this jigging music. No, sir, my name is Storer, of the firm of Storer, Heaviside, and Lapwell, of Mincing Lane, London, and of Calcutta.”

Sir William was most highly delighted and surprised, for he well knew the name of the house, and the magnitude of their concerns.

“ You, perhaps, do not think any better of me for not being a regular country squire, eh, Sir William? Well, never mind; hate false colours—no occasion for ’em, that’s one com-

fort. Bought a little estate near you—pretty place. Glad to see you in a family way.”

“ You must favour me with a call first,” said Sir William. “ I think we shall soon find that we know some mutual friends. I shall enjoy half an hour’s friendly chat with you exceedingly, when we can be quiet ; but to-night I must be everywhere, for my nephew is among the dancers.

“ Very true,” observed Mr. Storer ; “ and so is my Alicia, the dear girl. Good girl too, Sir William ; can give her a trifle. A lack and a lass together no bad things, eh ? But—mum. I never talk about those matters. I believe I’ve taken a trifle too much of that madeira—old though, very old—never does any harm then—but enough’s enough. Shall go and look at the dancers.”

Accordingly they took their way to the scene of juvenile enjoyment ; and when they were seen to approach by the young couple, the apparent high-words were nothing more than the elevation of voice usual with the merchant on

such occasions, which, however, were very rare, and easily recognised by his daughter.

When Mr. Storer subsequently called at Audrey Hall, he and Sir William did, as they anticipated, very soon find a considerable number of mutual friends ; for, although the former had never been in the East, there were few persons of importance on the Calcutta side with whom, from the extent of his connexions, he had not been brought in contact. Sir William's services had been on the other side ; but, nevertheless, the " firm " in Mincing Lane was well known to him.

Their next topic of conversation was Bernard's particular attention to Alicia, concerning which they soon came to an understanding. Sir William mentioned the expected family baronetcy, and gave his nephew such a character, as might have satisfied any father. Mr. Storer felt that he could not have any objections to the match, but agreed with the knight in thinking it better that the young gentleman should remain in ignorance of the lady's expectations ; and the knight himself, having some recollection

of events which occurred in long bygone days, was of opinion that stolen fruit always tasted the sweetest.

When they were walking round the grounds on the morning of Sir William's call at Maxdean, the exact state of things had been mutually explained; but they agreed that the sincerity of the lover's attachment should be put to the proof in the manner just related.

As he had now undergone the ordeal, the only question was how long the young couple should be kept in suspense, and that was soon settled, as we shall see presently.

In the mean while Bernard and Alicia were walking slowly along their favourite shady walk, making certain philosophical remarks respecting the cold, calculating feelings, or, rather, want of feeling, attendant on old age. He related to her what had passed between Sir William and himself; and, notwithstanding the lover-like "perfectibility" in which he viewed his mistress, felt some degree of trepidation when mentioning the necessary abandonment of his claim to the baronetcy; for he was aware how partial

young ladies commonly are to being called by the title of "Lady."

Alicia, however, made very light of the affair, and so convinced Bernard that she possessed a very extraordinary strength of mind, while, in reality, her apparent *nonchalance* arose from a consciousness that, if Sir William thought fit to give up the claim, her father could very well afford to resume it, and, from his business-like habits, would, most probably, bring the matter more speedily to a conclusion. But, as she did not think proper to say so much on the present occasion, she was compelled to hear divers compliments on her judicious estimate of empty honours, which could not bestow happiness on the possessor, whereas sincere and devoted affection wanted nothing but—

The daily dinner-bell here sounded, and cut the subject short; and presently the little party were sitting at table, as Mr. Storer said, "Quite in a family way." Sir William conducted himself with most magnificent condescension, taking wine alternately with both the ladies, his host, and his nephew, whom he stiffly addressed as "Mr. Audrey."

Nobody appeared to feel at ease, save the master of the house, who discharged his volleys of broken sentences with as much careless freedom as though the pompous knight had been one of his own clerks. Indeed it occasionally seemed as though he meant to ridicule the old gentleman's stiffness by his display of contempt for ceremony. At length the cloth was removed, the dessert was on the table, the servants had left the room, and the knight was more ceremoniously attentive to the ladies, and, if possible, more ridiculously stiff than ever; at least, so thought his nephew: but none of these things affected Mr. Storer, who filled his glass, and rallied every one by turns, and appeared "quite in his glory."

Poor Bernard was extremely mortified, for he felt convinced that his father-in-law elect was sinking gradually, in Sir William's opinion, to the level of a very common "grocer" indeed. As he could not obtain his uncle's consent to his union with Alicia, his wish had been that he should leave the house with, at least, no increase of prejudice against the connexion; but

all hope on that head was now at an end, and he longed for the time when the carriage should be ordered to the door.

In due course the ladies retired, and Bernard's uneasiness increased in proportion, as there was now no one but himself to divert Mr. Storer's attention from the knight, who exhibited an appearance of ludicrous distress, which might have amused the young gentleman in any other person, and under different circumstances. He was now about to part from that uncle who had, up to the last few hours, been the friend of his youth ! Perhaps they might never again sit at the same table ! The thought was painful, and he resolved to show him every possible mark of respect, even at the risk of offending Mr. Storer, of whose goodness of disposition, however, he had such an opinion, as not to be apprehensive of any lasting or serious consequences. Sir William perceived his anxiety, and doubtless properly appreciated his attentions, inasmuch as he forgot himself so far as to call him by the accustomed familiar name of "Bernard." This was gratifying to the

young man's feelings, who could not help fancying that it augured well for a future reconciliation; and he was indulging himself in a momentary reverie to that effect, when he was startled, and all his dreams dispersed, by Mr. Storer, who suddenly exclaimed,

“Come, Sir William, what say you to beginning this bottle of madeira? Two and forty years old, sir; has been three times to the East. Your's is good—capital; but this—well—I'll say nothing—judge for yourself. Come, a bumper! Ay, and one of these your right sort of glasses!” and filling one, of no common dimensions, to the brim, he passed the decanter to the knight, saying, “No daylight, mind—a bumper!”

Greatly as Bernard was surprised by this downright manner of forcing his venerable guest to swallow such an unusual quantity of wine, his attention was quickly called to the extraordinary behaviour of his uncle, who took the decanter, and implicitly obeyed the commands of his host; and, then, looking him in the face, with the gay air of a boon companion, said, “Come, sir, I look to you for the toast.”

A thought flashed across the youth's mind that the old gentleman had already taken too much, and he exclaimed, "My dear uncle! let me entreat of you not to take that wine. If you recollect, you told me the other day, that you were never so well as when you confined yourself to half-a-dozen glasses, and you have already—I'm sure Mr. Storer will excuse you."

"I'm sure I shall do no such thing," said Mr. Storer.

"And I'm sure I shan't excuse myself!" exclaimed Sir William. "So—come, sir, out with your toast!—and then I'll tell you what I think of your supernaculum."

"Standing?" cried Mr. Storer.

"With all my heart," replied the now jovial old knight.

"My *dear* uncle!" exclaimed Bernard.

"Nonsense, boy!" said Sir William. "Let us old fellows have our own way for once. You shall have a bumper presently, but it's not your turn yet. Come, Storer, my boy; give the word! I'm ready on my pins."

"Well then," said Mr. Storer, "here's to

the young couple ! Long life, health, and happiness attend them ! and may you and I be as merry and as hearty as we are now, at the christening of young Bernard and little Alicia, and half-a-score more, for aught I care."

"The young couple ! Bernard and Alicia ! Long life, health and happiness to them ! and all the rest," cried Sir William. And then they both emptied their glasses, shook hands, and sat down ; and the knight, looking his astonished nephew in the face, said gaily—

"I hope *now*, Sir, that you'll never prevent me from taking a bumper again, whenever I feel disposed."

Bernard stared, and then shut his eyes, and put his hands before them — and, anon, opened them again, and commenced a very bungling speech, by way of "returning thanks ;" but, finding that he could make nothing of it, he started upon his legs and bolted out of the room, to tell Alicia the joyful news.

"Good day's work !" said Mr. Storer. "Fine young fellow ! Likes Alicia, I really believe. Good girl, too. Good daughter al-

ways makes good wife. Fell in love first meeting—all right, first love both sides, eh?"

"This is a happy day for me," observed Sir William. "The youth has always, hitherto, conducted himself with such propriety, that I have had no other anxiety about him except what related to his marriage; and really there are so many chances against a young man's choosing *precisely* as one could wish, that I have often been troubled with misgivings."

"Ay, ay, know what you mean," said Mr. Storer; "same with me about Ally. Never said I could give her a penny—people found it out, though. Obligated to leave off going to Margate, Hastings, and Brighton. Pack of fools buzzing round her always. Bought this place on purpose to be snug. Nobody knows me here—wonder you did. Never would have found me out but for that madeira, eh? Never does any harm, that. Take another glass!"

The mutual and self congratulations of the two worthy elders were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the lovers and the good lady of the house; and immediately there was a

scene enacted by the various individuals of, what might now be very justly called, the family party. Sir William pressed Alicia's hand, then kissed it, and then gave it to Bernard, who, forthwith, took the same liberties, and one or two more not worth mentioning. Mr. Storer embraced his child, and then kissed his wife, and then shook Bernard by the hand, and insisted upon it that all three should sit down and take a glass of the old madeira.

The remainder of that day was spent, by the uncle and father, in talking over the "settlement," and other arrangements of importance, needful before the ceremony which was to unite their families. Each appeared perfectly satisfied with what the other proposed, and both agreed, that it might be as well to wait, for a few weeks, to ascertain whether there was any prospect of a speedy recovery of the baronetcy, and then, if procrastination still continued to be the order of the day among the lawyers and antiquaries, matters were, nevertheless, to take their course, and the young couple were to be put into possession of Audrey Hall.

While the old people were making these arrangements, Bernard and Alicia were likewise engaged in talking over theirs, not exactly with the same precision, but yet, in a manner which was tolerably rational, considering that they were lovers. What is still more unusual was, that their plans accorded with those of their elders, for they also thought it would be better to ascertain how the question of the baronetcy really stood, though the eventful issue neither would, should, or could, make any difference in their affection. And of the sincerity and duration of the latter they exchanged and repeated manifold declarations, as is usual in such cases.

Sir William Audrey and his nephew slept that night at Maxdean Hall, and were each blessed with exceedingly pleasant dreams, not quite so much at variance with each other as those of old and young too commonly are. Both saw a wedding, and beheld their antient family seat restored to its former grandeur, and the surrounding park and grounds changed from desolate wildness into tastefully arranged and picturesque beauty.

On the morrow the whole party went over to the said mansion, and Sir William made known his intention of resigning it to Bernard, who, consequently, consulted Alicia's taste respecting the improvements projected and in progress; and in order that she might be able to judge properly, deemed it necessary that they should walk, drive, or ride in every direction together.

All this could not be accomplished in one day, and so there was a constant going to and fro from Audrey to Maxdean Hall, and *vice versâ*. The happy young couple were ever together, and time flew by with the rapidity which he always spitefully persists in whenever we particularly wish him to linger. And the claim to the baronetcy, too, went on most promisingly, as all the Audreys who were living two centuries back, were now clearly ascertained to be defunct, with the exception of one tough old soldier, who, being a bachelor at eighty-four years of age, had gone upon an excursion into Scotland, for the purpose of enjoying his favourite sport of angling. But, even to him a clue was found, by the accidental

turning up of a letter among the family papers in an old chest. This letter was written by him from the banks of the Eden, where he had become domesticated in the house of a laird, and committed immense havoc among the finny tribe. As everybody and everything is known and recollected for a hundred years in that country, even as a matter of yesterday, no doubt was felt as to the certainty of tracking the veteran sportsman to his last quarters.

Our young hero, thus blessed with health, wealth, the approbation of friends, and, more than all, with the affection of her whose love alone he sought, appeared to have nothing left to wish for. It had been well for him if he had contented himself with the possession of all that any mortal ought to desire; but foolish wishes are ever occurring to us poor mortals, though happily they are not often granted,—if they were, many of us might be as sadly perplexed and harassed in consequence as was poor Bernard Audrey.

CHAPTER III.

DURING four weeks our lovers continued in the full enjoyment of all the manifold and delicious pleasures attendant upon that period which has often been called the happiest of mortal existence, namely, the period of probation before marriage.

It was now the month of September. Sir William Audrey had gone to Cheltenham, in order to recruit strength sufficient to endure the fatigues of the wedding dinner, consequent visits, &c. ; in all of which he proposed to play a distinguished part. The masons, carpenters, bricklayers, painters, gardeners, and labourers, were busily engaged in and about Audrey Hall, and Bernard now and then went to observe their progress, when he could spare an hour

from the delights of Maxdean, where Mr. Storer had invited him to spend a week or two, as he could not be accommodated in his own house.

The family party was now likewise increased by the arrival of two of Alicia's former school companions, Miss Charlotte Read and Miss Emily Hitchins, to both of whom she had vowed everlasting friendship: but Charlotte Read was her "*very particular.*" These young ladies "highly approved" of the choice made by their dear friend, and Bernard, in return, highly approved of them, and conducted himself towards them with as much politeness as could be expected from a person in his circumstances. A single day sufficed to put them upon a footing of easy familiarity; and he and Alicia went out and came in as they thought fit, leaving the spinsters to amuse each other.

Yet there were times when the three young ladies appeared to enjoy being by themselves, and on such occasions, as far as Bernard could judge from a transient glimpse through the windows they enjoyed themselves exceedingly.

It cannot be said that he envied their pleasure, for he was pleased to see them happy, and assuredly he had no suspicions of any backbiting or plots against himself, for he felt that he was a favourite with all three; yet he could not avoid wishing to know what they were talking about. Now young ladies have their little secrets, and it is a dangerous thing to attempt to meddle with them, as full many a luckless wight has found to his cost, though probably very few have been punished precisely in the same way as Bernard Audrey.

The fatal day was one of extreme loveliness; every tree, shrub, flower, and plant in the sweet little pleasure-grounds of Maxdean, appeared to have arrived at its maturity of beauty. The leaves were tinted with the various hues of autumn, but had not begun to fall; the air was fragrant, and seemed merry with the joyous melody of birds; the very grass of the smooth-shaven lawn appeared to rejoice in a deeper green than usual; and as Bernard passed over it, he felt and said to himself that he was completely happy, for, besides all the favourable

circumstances with which he was blessed, he, moreover, was endued with a keen perception and relish for the charms of nature. Thus, light of heart, he gaily crossed the lawn, and advanced to one of the French windows of the little drawing-room before mentioned, and looking in, beheld the three fair friends engaged in earnest conversation. But the folding-doors were closed and fastened, and as soon as the young ladies perceived him, they laughed, and then rose up and came to the window, and told him good-humouredly to go about his business, as he was not wanted there just at present. He said something about its being “a sin to stay in doors on such a day;” upon which Alicia bade him go and enjoy himself alone for half an hour, and then they would all come out together. After another slight effort to entice her out immediately, finding that the three charming faces only laughed at him through the glass, he laughed likewise, and then, like a dutiful lover, obeyed the commands of his mistress, and went his way, in exceeding good-humour with himself, the ladies, and all the world.

Little did he dream what was about to happen when he entered an arbour, thickly covered with jessamine, woodbine, and roses, and threw himself upon a seat, where he had passed many trance-like hours with Alicia. "I should like to know what they are now talking about," he exclaimed. "I wish I was invisible!"

No wish could possibly be much more ridiculous, but it struck his fancy at the moment, and he again repeated it; and then allowing his imagination to play with the idea for a minute or two, he became highly excited by the sport which it presented to his view, and again he ejaculated, "What a glorious thing it would be! I do, *indeed*, wish I could be invisible!"

The number three has long been celebrated for its potency, both for good and evil; and no sooner had the third exclamation passed his lips, than he heard a short cough, not many yards from the place where he was sitting. Instantly starting up, he looked out from among the clustering tendrils, and beheld a stranger, walking slowly towards the bower. "Who can he be?" was the first question he asked himself.

“ I must surely have heard if any visiter had arrived since I have been sitting here.”

The unknown continued to move on leisurely, every now and then coughing, more as if to give notice of his approach than as though it were absolutely necessary. He was altogether a person of very singular appearance, elderly, thin, and remarkably pale, even to a degree of whiteness which prevented the features of his countenance from being distinctly visible : eyes, nose, lips, and even his hair, seemed to partake of the same want of tint. When he came to the entrance of the bower, he stopped, and looking in upon Bernard, (who had shrunk into a corner, in order to avoid making a perhaps troublesome acquaintance,) made an apology for his intrusion.

“ You are probably seeking for Mr. Storer, sir,” observed our hero ; “ if so, you will find him at the hot-houses, where he has some men at work.”

“ If you will permit me,” said the elderly gentleman, “ I will take a seat here for a minute or two, as I feel somewhat fatigued,” and,

without waiting for any reply, he placed himself by the side of Bernard, who, marvelling much, began guessing who his new, free and easy friend might possibly be.

“ You are wondering who I am, I dare say,” observed the white-faced old gentleman, “ and perhaps can’t understand how I got admittance here, when I tell you that I have neither acquaintance nor business with Mr. Storer. But the fact is, that I am in possession of a most wonderful secret, by means of which I go just wherever I please. All places are open to me ; no person can prevent me from passing, even into the presence of royalty, where indeed I have often stood without the knowledge even of the king himself.”

Bernard listened to this extraordinary statement, and decided that the speaker must be a stray member of a lunatic asylum not far distant, and with that idea resolved to humour him till the arrival of some of the people from the establishment, where he would, doubtless, soon be missed. The old gentleman’s paleness and shrivelled appearance offered, he thought,

a sufficient security against any danger from personal violence, in case of a paroxysm. With this philanthropic view he remarked, "Indeed, Sir, yours must be a most valuable secret, and doubtless has been the result of deep study?"

"Not exactly," replied he of the indistinct features; "I acquired the secret in the space of less than a minute, and in that time could communicate it to any one of common understanding, if I thought proper."

"I should be sorry," said our hero, "to seem impertinently inquisitive, but may I be allowed to ask the nature of the discovery which you have made, without for a moment presuming to inquire into hidden mysteries or occult causes?"

"It is most likely that you will be incredulous," observed the pale-faced stranger.

"You need not be apprehensive on that score, I assure you," replied Bernard, "for I am perfectly aware that the small stock of knowledge which, at my years, I have been able to pick up, is barely sufficient to conduct me to the verge of the abstruse sciences. At

your time of life you must have had more leisure, better opportunities, and most probably, greater inclination and abilities. Indeed, I am convinced that, as Shakspeare says, ‘there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.’ ”

“ You and he are both right,” observed the indistinct-looking elderly gentleman ; “ but nevertheless, prepared as you seem to be to hear something not ‘dreamt of in your philosophy,’ I dare say you will feel surprised when I tell you that my secret is neither more nor less than that I know how to render myself invisible whenever I think fit.”

“ That is indeed a wonderful secret ! ” exclaimed our hero, now quite confirmed in his suspicions ; “ a most valuable secret ! I would give much to be in possession of it myself. Nothing would afford me greater delight than the power of thus withdrawing from the view of others.”

“ I can very easily teach you,” observed the pale man.

“ Indeed ! I should be very much obliged to

you," cried Bernard, determined, as he afterwards said, to let the old fellow have his way, as the best mode of keeping him in good humour.

"Perhaps not," said the stranger.

"I assure you indeed that I should be exceedingly obliged to you," repeated the lover.

"It would give me an infinite deal of pleasure."

"Are you sure of that?" asked the pallid man.

"Certain!" exclaimed Bernard; "positive; I have a particular wish to be invisible."

The extraordinary-looking elderly gentleman proceeded to make brief procrastinating remarks, till he had led the young man to affirm distinctly, his wish of being invisible sufficiently often to make up the apparently necessary number of three times three. He then began rubbing his hands and giggling, like a delighted child, for about half a minute, when he suddenly checked himself, and gravely said, "You shall be in possession of your wish immediately; but you must lend me your ear."

"I am all ear," replied Bernard, with an

affectation of profound respect, and then he sat in a listening attitude to hear, as he supposed, one of those whimsical and ingenious theories which the strong and shattered mind amuses itself in weaving during the absence of that directing and mysterious principle called reason.

“That is not what I mean,” said he of the invisible secret, taking two small boxes from his waistcoat pocket, and opening one; “I must rub some of this ointment on the tip of your left ear. Don’t be alarmed; you will not experience the smallest inconvenience; and it is absolutely necessary in order to make you perfectly master of my secret and my power.”

The young man was startled, and at first hesitated at the idea of trusting an organ so useful and ornamental as an ear, in the hands of a deranged person; but another glance at the meagre frame of the operator decided the question. He resolved to submit quietly to the ridiculous ceremony, rather than risk the chance of giving umbrage, and consequently losing the eccentric mystery which, he doubted not, was

to follow. Accordingly he turned himself about and assumed the necessary position, taking especial care at the same time to be perfectly prepared for resistance, in case his whimsical old pale-faced friend should attempt any violence. But it was impossible that an ear could be treated with more apparent tenderness. The elderly gentleman handled it even as though he had been a professed aurist, and with his forefinger and thumb gently rubbed in a portion of the ointment about that part which ladies commonly decorate with a ring.

“ I must now do the same to the other ear,” said the stranger, opening the second box, and Bernard immediately shifted his attitude, and with some difficulty kept his countenance, for his fears were now entirely banished, and he began to enjoy the oddity of the sport exceedingly. When the right ear had undergone the same process as had been performed upon its sinister fellow, the indistinct-featured inventor resumed his seat and returned his box of invisible unction to his waistcoat pocket, and thus began :—

“Your wish, Sir, is now accomplished. You can be invisible whenever you think proper. You have nothing else to do than to pull your left ear, whenever such is your desire, and, instantly, you will become imperceptible. And not only you, but every article that you carry about you, either of dress, use, or ornament. When you are tired of remaining unseen, just pull your right ear, and you will, in a moment, find yourself as perfectly visible as you are now. There—that’s the whole of my secret. I said that I could teach it in half a minute. You’ve got it now, and I’ve no more to say—so I wish you a good morning.”

As he uttered these last words, he rose up, bowed, and walked away, at a much quicker pace than he had practised on his first appearance.

“I must watch where the poor fellow goes,” said Bernard, humanely, “I should blame myself much if he met with any accident, for he appears to be perfectly harmless.”

With this remark, he left the bower, and hurried along the walk which the stranger had taken, much surprised at not seeing him.

Still greater was his astonishment, when, arriving at the end of the walk, which was long and straight, he looked to the right and left, and no human creature was to be seen. “Some whim has struck the unfortunate man,” said he to himself, “and he is probably concealed among the shrubs, perhaps watching if I shall be such a fool as to begin pulling my ears. But we must get rid of him somehow, as the young ladies will be walking out presently; and I cannot suffer Alicia to be exposed to his vagaries, which may not perhaps be always quite so unobjectionable as this ear-pulling business. I will go to Mr. Storer and request him to spare some of the workmen to search for the poor fellow, and we must contrive to inveigle him into the house.”

In pursuance of this plan, Bernard began to thread his well-known way through a labyrinth of shady walks towards the hot-houses. He had not proceeded far, ere, giving loose to the merriment, which he contrived to stifle in the presence of his pale visiter, he exclaimed,—
“Poor gentleman! What a most extraordinary

fancy! Ha, ha! How, in the name of all that is wonderful, could the notion have first entered into his head? And then, the gravity with which he went about the work of anointing my ears! No bishop, at a coronation, could appear more impressed with the importance of his part in the ceremony. Really, the whole affair is most delightfully ridiculous; and after all, I dare say he enjoys himself exceedingly, in the firm conviction that he becomes invisible by just pulling his left ear thus ——."

Our hero, as he terminated the last sentence, suited the action to the word, and immediately stood transfixed with astonishment. He saw the trees, the shrubs, the gravel walk, on which he felt that he was yet standing; but he could behold no part of himself, though he moved his hands before where his face ought to be, and stretched out one of his legs, and then laid hold of different parts of himself, as if to ascertain whether any of his members were missing.

"Can it be possible?" he exclaimed,—“This is indeed something not hitherto dreamt of in our philosophy!” and a shivering, uncomfort-

able sensation came over him, at the conviction that the pallid individual, by whom he had been anointed, was no lunatic after all, but, too probably, one endued with a very considerable deal more cunning than himself.

Still there was one consolation. He had heard of strange gifts, bestowed by mysterious strangers, seldom with any good intent or eventual benefit towards the acceptor. But, in such cases, he had been led to understand that it was customary for the giver to enforce the signature of certain bonds, containing hard, impracticable, or equivocal conditions, which in process of time made the signer bitterly repent of his folly. Now, nothing of that sort had been demanded or even hinted at, in the present instance. The power so wonderfully bestowed upon him was a free gift—a fulfilment of his wishes, merely, as it seemed, in consequence of his having expressed them. He had not even asked or dreamt of obtaining such a singular property. No mysterious agency had been invoked—no suspicion that the pale-faced elderly gentleman was anything more or less than a common man,

had crossed his mind—and he had undergone the whimsical ceremony of invisible anointment with feelings which would bear the strictest investigation.

Fortified by these considerations, and conscious of the rectitude of his own conduct, he soon recovered his presence of mind; and, eventually terminated his reflections by congratulating himself upon what had happened, and resolving to use his imperceptible gift with all due discretion.

He had just arrived at this conclusion, when he saw Alicia's favourite spaniel at the end of the walk in which he stood. "Ponto, poor Ponto!" he cried. The animal pricked up its ears, looked wildly about, and then came running towards the spot from whence the well-known voice proceeded, and struck itself violently against one of the legs of the now invisible gentleman. Seeing nothing, but feeling the shock, the terrified spaniel began yelping, while Bernard winced and began rubbing his unseen shin, which had not escaped harmless in the collision with Ponto's open mouth. At that mo-

ment he heard Alicia calling to him, to know where he was.

“ Here I am,” he replied, “ in the long, straight gravel walk. Where are you ?”

“ Stay where you are then,” she answered, from a short distance among the trees, “ stay where you are, and we will come to you directly.”

In a few seconds the three young ladies were standing in the walk not ten yards from him.

“ He is not here,” exclaimed Miss Charlotte Read, looking him full in the face.

“ It’s very odd,” observed Miss Emily Hitchins, “ but he can’t be very far off. I’m sure his voice sounded in this direction.”

“ Where are you, Bernard ?” exclaimed Alicia.

Our hero, much delighted at the novelty of the sport, now stepped briskly aside, and answered, “ Here.”

As he moved, the young ladies, though they saw him not, perceived a rustling among the shrubs by which he passed, and Alicia gaily set Ponto to hunt him out. The docile creature, though scarcely recovered from his alarm,

wagged his tail on receiving his mistress's command, and bounded forward, obedient to its natural instinct, and again came violently in contact with the invisible legs of our hero. The result was, as before, a yell of pain and terror on one side, and shin-rubbing on the other. To the latter Bernard now added a hasty malediction on the poor innocent brute, and then, making his way to a cluster of laurel bushes, he stooped down, that his transformation might not be perceived, and pulled his right ear, upon which the various parts of his outward man appeared clearly and distinctly as usual. He forthwith joined the ladies, who soon noticed that there was something odd in his manner; and Miss Charlotte Read declared that she knew he had been in some mischief by his looks.

"Yes," said Alicia, "you are plotting something now, I'm sure. I'm determined to know what it is—so you may as well tell me at once."

Bernard affirmed that he had no plot to reveal, and had merely hid himself for a moment to see if they could find him.

“It was very foolish of you,” observed Alicia, taking his arm.

“And impossible too,” added Miss Charlotte Read, laughing: “just as if we three together couldn’t have found you, wherever you were hid, while you kept talking.”

“I don’t think you would have been able,” said Bernard.

“I should like to have a game of hide and seek, of all things!” exclaimed Charlotte, whose character at school had been always that of a determined romp: “Do, Alicia, let us have a game of hide and seek!”

“Are we not getting a little too old?” asked Miss Emily Hitchins demurely.

“No, no, nonsense,” replied Charlotte. “There’s nobody here but ourselves, so what does it signify what we do? You’ll join, I’m sure, Alicia; that’s a dear. Come, we’ll wait here till he calls out ‘Whoop.’ I never saw a better place for a game. I declare I feel as if I was a school-girl again.”

Alicia gazed delighted upon the beautiful and animated countenance of her friend, and

felt that she could not refuse to join in the innocent frolic, although she would have preferred a quiet ramble with her lover. Emily Hitchins was a good-natured, gentle girl, who made it a rule never to stand in the way of the gratification of those whom she loved ; and so the matter was soon arranged, and the young gentleman was despatched to secrete himself, and then to cry “ Whoop,” all in due form.

Retiring to a convenient spot, he pulled his left ear, and gave the signal, and immediately the three fair beings began a hunt, which afforded him most exquisite amusement, as he followed them alternately in his invisible guise, and ever and anon puzzled them by a cry from some place which they had previously searched. Old times seemed to have come back upon Charlotte Read. She scrambled through the shrubs and bushes, till the whole of her dress was in a most charming state of disorder. Alicia appeared to have caught the infection, and hurried to and fro, while the glow produced by exercise in the open air, played upon her cheeks ; and as she occasionally stood still to

take breath, Bernard thought he had never before seen her look so beautiful. Even the sedate Emily looked animated, as she went creeping and peeping under the shrubs and round every corner.

“ This is indeed delightful !” thought the lover, as he stood close by, gazing upon the panting and unconscious object of his affections.

“ What a couple of frights we have made of ourselves !” she exclaimed. “ Do pray, Charlotte, help me to put up my hair, and lend me a pin or two. I ’m sure I ’m glad I didn’t find him just now. I should have been quite ashamed of myself. I declare I ’m not fit to be seen.”

While the little “ setting to rights” was going forward, Bernard withdrew a few yards, and pulling a small branch from a young fir, observed with joy, that, even as the elderly pale man had said, it became invisible in his hands ; but, immediately he threw it from him, it again became apparent, and lighted upon the two friends, as they were engaged in their task.

“ He must be close by now,” exclaimed

Charlotte, bounding away in the direction from whence the bough appeared to come, and leaving Alicia to arrange her dishevelled hair and *et cæteras* as she might. “He must be just here,” she cried again; and, a moment after, uttered a loud shriek, and fell senseless on the ground. She had, in her haste, rendered it impossible for Bernard to get out of her way, and their heads had encountered with a violence, not only painful in itself, but so incomprehensible to her, that she fell, as much from alarm, as from the effects of the collision.

“Help, Bernard! help, Emily!” cried the terrified Alicia, running to the assistance of her friend.

Bernard had sufficient presence of mind to retreat into a corner, ere he ventured to obey the summons visibly. No sooner, however, had he pulled his right ear, than he found himself in a very unfit state to go to attend upon the young lady; his hands and face being covered with blood, that continued to issue from his unlucky olfactory member, which had, in consequence of his being in a stooping posture, been

butted at most furiously, by her more delicate, yet much harder forehead.

“Bernard, Bernard ; do pray come wherever you are !” again cried Alicia, in great distress.

“Com—comi—. Be wi—you—di—rectly,” snivelled her lover, as well as he was able ; and then hastening forward, struck himself, as if by accident, against a tree, in order to account for his shocking appearance. No sooner, however, did she behold him, than, instead of asking any questions, she uttered a wild cry of alarm, and sank by the side of poor Charlotte, leaving him and the trembling Emily to pick them both up. But it luckily happened that the noise had reached the house, and brought out Mrs. Storer and some of the servants ; and, a few moments after their arrival upon the field of action, just as the fallen parties were coming to themselves, Mr. Storer likewise made his appearance, and much marvelling at the scene before him, exclaimed, “What’s the matter ? Can’t have been fighting, sure ? Young ladies ! oh, no ! Bernard got the worst though — all right that. But what’s the matter—nobody speak ?”

Charlotte was the first to recover, and replied that it was all her fault. "I was running, head foremost, without seeing where I went, and ran against Mr. Audrey."

"No, my dear," said Alicia, revived sufficiently to hear the last words; "he was not near you, I assure you, for I was looking at the moment you fell."

"La, my love! how can you talk so?" asked Charlotte. "Look at his nose."

"Miss Storer is right," observed Bernard. "I was running to your assistance after you were down, when the branch of a tree unluckily took me—"

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard," said Charlotte, staring with surprise. "Why, I recollect as well as possible. I felt you lay hold of me, and cry 'oh!' just the moment before I struck myself so violently, but after that I don't exactly know what happened."

"I can assure you, Charlotte," observed Emily Hitchins, "that you need not blame yourself for Mr. Audrey's misfortune; for hearing you call out 'He is just here,' I watched

where you went, and saw you tumble down; I couldn't conceive why, because there appeared to be nothing in the way."

Overpowered by this corresponding evidence, the bewildered young lady rubbed her eyes, and began to question whether she had yet quite recovered the use of her senses.

"Well, well," said Mr. Storer; "no great matter who ran against—foolish piece of business—pretty figures all of you—something to do to dress for dinner—be too late if you don't look sharp—never wait for anybody, mind that. Nothing the matter with *you*, is there Ally?"

"No, papa," replied Alicia, smiling, "I was only startled when, as I was trying to lift Charlotte from the ground, I looked up and saw what a frightful figure Mr. Audrey was, leaning over me."

"Enough to frighten you too," observed her father laughing. "Pretty mess he's in, that's certain, to attend upon a lady. Must get pumped upon, eh? Set of madcaps altogether. Ay, ay, *black-eyes!*" (looking at Miss Read;) "you are at the bottom of it all, I see. Never

quiet two minutes together, were you? eh? Come, don't sit in the dirt any longer, either of you. Jump up, there's good girls, and go and make yourselves tidy, or you won't be ready by dinner-time."

When the young ladies were at their toilet Charlotte again repeated the manner in which it appeared to her that she had been knocked down. "I felt him seize me as plainly as possible," she said, "and he grasped me violently by both arms, as if to prevent me from falling; and I can even fancy that I feel his grip, just here—and, look! I declare, here are the marks! What do you say now?"

Her two friends could not deny that the prints were such as might have been left by the strong grasp of a man's hands under such circumstances, but repeated what they had before said respecting her fall, when the evidence of their senses convinced them that no one was near her. But how to account for the said marks was somewhat perplexing, and unluckily, Alicia hit upon a method which made her feel a *little* uncomfortable. It struck her, that Char-

lotte, giving way to her high spirits, must have been "romping" with Bernard when she was not present; for certainly, when she had been with them he had never laid hold of her in such a manner as could have produced the prints in question. This sort of conduct was, she decided, under existing circumstances, very unbecoming in both parties; and Charlotte's *attempt* to explain away the thing in such an extraordinary manner was even yet more objectionable, and gave to the whole affair a colouring, which gradually diffused itself over her mind, and made her resolve to watch very closely the future behaviour of her lover and her "very particular" friend.

In the mean while Bernard, while dressing for dinner, loaded himself with reproaches for having made such a foolish use of the extraordinary power with which he was endued. He reflected, that he had risked the chance of discovery far more than would be necessary on really important occasions, without having any object in view save that of indulging a most childish gratification, and he resolved to be more guarded for the future.

CHAPTER IV.

BERNARD AUDREY had from his earliest youth been remarkable for the extreme openness and candour of his character ; a falsehood was a thing which he detested in others to such a degree, that he had never dreamt of the possibility of being personally guilty of such a meanness, so low and paltry a vice. Always to speak the truth, if he spoke at all upon any subject, had hitherto been his maxim, or more correctly, perhaps, his pride. It is a dangerous thing to be proud, even of our virtues, if perchance we happen to have any, and, be the fact in that particular as it may, most people fancy themselves possessed of some such endowments. The "bold bad man" glories in being no hypocrite, and even the vilest of malefactors have

some mental "set off" to counterbalance their crimes, while thousands and millions

Compound for sins they 're most inclined to
By damning those which they 've no mind to.

Our hero, holding all descriptions of falsehood in abhorrence, was not a little shocked at finding himself on the following day prevaricating, and, at length, telling a downright fib to Alicia. But what could he do, when she told him of the marks which his rude grasp had left on the arms of her friend? He remembered perfectly well the sudden and violent effort which he had made to save both her and himself; but the truth could not be told without forfeiting all the anticipated advantages of his newly-acquired secret; and even if he abandoned all these, it was a question somewhat too serious to dwell upon, what effect the knowledge of his present double character might have upon Alicia's mind, and consequently upon his own future happiness? He therefore at first declared himself unable to account for the said marks on poor Charlotte's arms, then began to wonder

how they could have come there, and eventually exclaimed — “ Oh ! I have it ! I remember now ! It must have been when I lifted her from the ground, after you called me to your assistance. I recollect thinking at the time how heavy she was, and was compelled to take a very firm hold.”

A man can scarcely be a good liar without serving a regular apprenticeship to the mystery, and Bernard was just entering upon his novitiate ; therefore it is not surprising that this figment was but ill got up. Alicia, however, affected to believe it might be as he represented, though a very little consideration sufficed to tell her, that when a gentleman wished to assist a young lady to rise, it was not customary for him to seize her by the small of the arm and pinch her black and blue. There were better, and more graceful, and more natural ways of effecting the purpose, and she had no particular reason for believing that Bernard was really so extremely awkward about such matters. When they separated, therefore, her “ uncomfortableness” respecting her “ very par-

ticular" friend and her lover continued; and continuance in such cases is tantamount to increase, as the mind is too apt to weigh the importance of trifles according to the length of time which it has permitted itself to harbour them.

She resolved to make a confidant of Miss Emily Hitchins upon the occasion, and ask her advice. It was the first time that this young lady had been so highly honoured, her position among her friends being that of a good-humoured, quiet, inoffensive girl, always willing to do or join in anything that could afford pleasure to others, perfectly content to follow, but never presuming to lead.

"You saw, my dear Emily," said Alicia, "you saw very plainly as well as I did, how Charlotte fell down, and you know Mr. Audrey was not near her. Bless my heart!" she exclaimed, turning sharply round, "how I was startled! How strange it is that the door should fly open thus of its *own* accord!"

The fact was that Bernard at that moment made his entry in invisible guise. He had seen the two friends through the window in earnest

conversation, and resolved to make an experiment with his new powers, in hopes of receiving more gratification than had attended the follies of the preceding day.

“Thank you, my dear,” said Alicia to her friend, who shut the door, “I declare I thought somebody was coming, and I wouldn’t have anybody hear us for the world. What I am going to say is in *perfect* confidence, mind.”

“You may rely upon me, Alicia,” replied Emily. “You know I never tell anything to anybody.”

“Just in time,” thought Bernard, while he almost felt himself blush at the idea of thus meanly prying into their secrets.

“Well, my dear,” continued Alicia, “as I was saying, we both know that Charlotte did not run against Mr. Audrey, as she pretends to make us believe, contrary to the evidence of our senses; and so the marks on her arm could not have come *that* way. Now I was so much frightened when I saw him standing over me, all covered with blood, that I declare I don’t know what happened afterwards; but you are

always so cool and collected, that I dare say you can tell me exactly."

"Oh, dear! there was nothing particular happened after that," replied Emily. "You screamed and fell down, and Mr. Audrey raised you up, and supported your head with his arm, till your mother and the servants all came running to us."

"And who helped Charlotte?" asked Alicia.

"I helped her to sit up as well as I could," answered Emily; "but she very soon came to herself; and if it hadn't been for the comb that she broke, I should have thought it had been all sham, and that she hadn't struck herself against anything at all. And, now, I *cannot* conceive what it *could* have been, for she was running between two trees, and there didn't appear to be the least thing in the way."

"I am sure there wasn't," exclaimed Alicia; "but I never heard a word about the broken comb before. However, my dear, what I want to know *particularly* is, whether you are *quite* sure about Mr. Audrey's not picking up Charlotte?"

“ *Quite* — positive,” replied Emily. “ He never touched her. It was exactly as I told you just now. I held her up myself, till your mamma gave me her smelling-bottle, and then I held it to her nose, and she came to herself directly, and pushed it away.”

“ I declare—” Alicia began, “ I declare—I didn’t think I could have been so weak ; but *he* has just been telling me—I see it all now—what I shall do ?” and, throwing herself into a chair, she burst into tears.

At this sight, Bernard found great difficulty in restraining himself. This was the consequence of his first lie, which had been the natural result of his invisible secret. He had been previously schooling himself severely ; and now he silently cursed the elderly pale gentleman and his boxes of ointment, and wished that his wish had never been uttered or granted.

He was about to open the door, to make his retreat unseen, for the purpose of immediately returning and making his *appearance*, when Alicia recovered herself sufficiently to go on with the confidential communication to her

friend. So he remained and listened, not merely with the view of gratifying idle curiosity, but anxious to learn exactly how matters stood, that he might be enabled to judge what line of conduct it would be best for him to pursue. Alicia repeated to Emily what he had just told her, and then referred to the account which Charlotte had given of her fall, and afterwards continued,

“ Now *we* know, Emily, that they have *both* of them said what is not true. And why should they do so, if they have not some purpose to answer? You know I am not suspicious. You know how much I have loved Charlotte. I never had any secrets with *her*; and *never*, till yesterday, had the *smallest* reason to suspect that I was not equally in her confidence. But there *is* something now — *that* is plain enough; and when I think of the *other* person, it is almost more than I can bear. I always considered her high spirits, though, perhaps, hardly becoming our present age, as perfectly harmless and innocent; but here is

art—and cunning—and story-telling. Oh ! I do hate such ways ! And *she* always my *most particular* friend ! But she *never can* be so again !”

Here poor Alicia again sobbed violently ; Emily affectionately endeavoured to comfort her ; and Bernard ; unable to endure the scene any longer, opened the door and withdrew.

When the heretofore happy little circle met that day at dinner, a striking change was apparent in the manners of all the young people. Formality and cold politeness had usurped the place of accustomed ease and hilarity. Charlotte Read once or twice gave way to her natural flow of spirits, and then looked round with astonishment at the singular manner in which her sallies were received. Bernard pitied her, as he knew she was not to blame, and strove to smile ; but, the instant afterwards, fearing that his slightest attention towards her would be misinterpreted, he became confused. Alicia said as little as possible. And Emily scarcely spoke a word, but sate, as if her eyes were ear-

nestly fixed upon her plate, while ever and anon she threw a suspicious glance towards Charlotte and Bernard.

“What in the world is the matter with you all to-day?” exclaimed Mr. Storer: “been playing at hide and seek—run up against each other again, eh? Terrible dull—this’ll never do—never do—Champaigne, Jones! Hand it round! Make ’em toss it off, Bernard, while it’s good for something. Hate to see your misses and men-mollies, gaping at the bubbles.”

The sparkling glasses were filled by the butler most adroitly, and the wine was praised by all; but never was the effect of the effervescent medicament less conspicuous.

“One would think you had all been drinking *still* Champaigne, you are so silent,” said Mr. Storer—and then laughed at his own joke, which, bad as it might be, he thought was better than none. The sparkling of his eye, and good-humoured countenance, seemed to demand the tribute of a smile at least, and that tribute was paid, but nothing more. There was none of that careless, confiding gaiety, which had

been wont to run round the table. The alert principle of mirth, ready to catch the half-formed joke ere it fell from the speaker, and, by repartee, "to keep the game alive," was hushed within every breast.

When poor Mr. Storer had tried, vainly, every effort to rouse the young people from their lethargy, he retired from table, as soon as possible after dinner, under the pretence of looking after his work-people at the hot-houses.

"Can't think what's come to 'em," he muttered, as he went along; "some nonsense. Lovers' quarrel, I suppose—make it up soon—like each other better afterward, they say. Very foolish though—got all that young folks could wish for—don't know what they want—wish for the moon next—couple of fools—eh?"

The remainder of the day passed off as heavily as the dinner, and, instead of the wonted expressions of surprise, that it should "*already* be bed-time," all the young people pleaded fatigue, and retired early.

Mr. and Mrs. Storer, left alone to guess what was the matter, could make nothing of it; and,

though each affected to treat it with levity, while addressing the other, a very uncomfortable feeling predominated in the minds of both. Their daughter's happiness was every thing to the worthy couple; and it was but too evident, that something was wrong between her and her lover and friends. And so it happened, that, from natural anxiety concerning her, and thinking of what they had better do on the morrow, in case the coolness continued, the good people got very little sleep that night.

When Bernard found himself alone, instead of going to bed, fatigued and happy, as heretofore, with his head full of some pleasant schemes for the next day, he began restlessly pacing his apartment, every now and then throwing himself into a chair, and giving other evidences of a mind ill at ease. He had lost much in his own self-esteem. The lie which he had told, now seemed to stick in his throat—yet, how could he retract it? If he confessed the truth, he could not expect to be credited, unless he gave ocular demonstration of his extraordinary gift. But in that case, what would be the con-

sequences? He endeavoured to trace them—all was unsatisfactory—he could arrive at no conclusion. The prejudices of education, habit, and superstition, would all be against him. Lost in his reveries, he gradually allowed his imagination to glide among the thousand delightful uses to which he might apply his invisible powers, if he kept them to himself. They appeared too important to be abandoned rashly. He felt satisfied that he really possessed Alicia's affections, and resolved to trust to time, and her observations on his conduct in future.

“I shall act towards her and her friends as I have always done hitherto,” said he, “and then it will be impossible for her long to harbour her unjust suspicions, respecting which, of course, I shall pretend to know nothing. In the meanwhile, I will entirely abandon the use of my newly acquired gift, which has, already, while acting in the most innocent manner, brought me into difficulty.”

While he was thus engaged, a scene was enacted in Alicia's bed-room, to which she had retired with her confidant Emily, after they had

both very coolly wished Miss Read “a good night.” As this ceremony was performed at the head of the staircase, in the presence of one of the maid servants, Charlotte did not, at the moment, think fit to make any observation. But, as soon as the coast was clear, she hastened to the door of her “very particular” friend; and, shocked to find it locked against her, earnestly entreated admittance. Her request was for some time parried by pleas of having a headache, being extremely fatigued, wishing to go to bed, and so forth: but Charlotte kept her ground, and, eventually, obtained an audience.

“My dearest Alicia!” exclaimed the warm-hearted girl, “I cannot bear to part from you in this way. Ever since we have known each other, we have never once laid our heads upon our pillows in anger. I see there is something that I have either done or said which has offended you. I know I often speak and act thoughtlessly; but, indeed, indeed, my dear friend, never with the intention of giving any one pain, much less one whom I love so dearly as I do you. Do pray tell me what it is at

once! I cannot rest till you do—neither, I'm sure, can you—for I know the goodness of your heart too well to believe that you can bear malice."

A "very particular" friend, when once seriously offended, is generally a most inexorable, and often a very unjust sort of person. It was long before Alicia could be induced to speak in any degree explicitly. She referred Charlotte to her own feelings, her own recollection, her own conscience;—but all in vain. The poor girl declared herself utterly unconscious of having, either in thought, word, or deed, given the smallest cause of offence. At length the affair of the pinched arms was introduced. Miss Read stared, and looked at her arms, and rubbed them and her eyes; but was unable to comprehend what they could possibly have to do with the subject in question.

Alicia felt now quite provoked at what she judged to be most consummate duplicity, and repeated the evidence of her own and Emily's senses, to prove that Mr. Audrey was not near the accused at the time she fell, and, conse-

quently, could not have *then* imprinted those marks in the manner which she had described. Charlotte felt quite bewildered, and for some time was unable to make any reply; and her silence appeared to her two judges to be a proof of conscious guilt.

After some reflection, however, she said, "This is certainly the most extraordinary thing that I ever met with in the whole course of my life! I will not positively contradict you both, because I have no recollection of seeing Mr. Audrey at the moment. Indeed, I didn't see anything in the way, or I should not have run forward as I did: yet it does seem to me as if I ran against him, and he caught me by the arms, and I heard him cry 'oh!' as if he was hurt as well as myself. But, as you are so positive, I suppose all that must have been imagination."

"Then you give *that* up?" asked Alicia, sarcastically.

"What can you mean by treating me thus?" exclaimed Charlotte. "You know I *never* was guilty of telling falsehoods. I spoke what I

believed to be the truth, and can only imagine now that I must have swooned away. And I have heard of people fancying strange things in trances. But, I confess, it all appears most unaccountable to me—and not the least unaccountable part of the affair is, that you should be offended with me for hurting myself. After all, what possible difference *can* it make, whether I was knocked down by a man or a tree? It is quite absurd.” By this time Charlotte was beginning to be warm.

Her unlucky arms were again referred to by Alicia, who, with the most provoking air of triumph, said, “Perhaps, my dear, you will be so kind *now*, as to give us some *other* account of how you came by those marks. Don’t hurry yourself, I beg.”

The truth here flashed strongly again upon Charlotte, and she recollected perfectly, as if it had occurred but the moment before, that some one had really seized her by the arms the instant before she fell. She could, consequently, account for Alicia’s behaviour only by supposing that, for some unknown reason,

she was determined to break with her; and told her so in very plain language, adding, that the method she had taken was the most ridiculous imaginable. Words now ran high between the friends. Even the placid Emily was stirred up to wrath. Charges of hypocrisy, double dealing, and unworthy conduct, were made and recriminated. Bernard Audrey and the unfortunate arms were more than hinted at—and, at last, the two “very particular” friends parted for the night in a most ungracious manner, and with very unchristian-like feelings towards each other.

When Alicia and Emily were left together, they talked over what had happened in a most pathetic and sentimental style; and declared that it would be utterly out of their power in future, ever to have the least confidence in any human being, after being so cruelly deceived in Charlotte Read.

“And to think of her standing it out so,” said Alicia, “as if she thought to make us believe that we had no eyes! And then declaring, that if she didn’t come by her bruised

arms then, she had no idea when it could have happened ! Just as if a person could be pinched black and blue in that way without knowing how, and when, and where, and by whom too ! Oh, I have no patience with her ! To think of the vows of unalterable friendship that she has made to me ! It was only yesterday morning that she declared she had no secrets with me, and that her *only* wish was to see me happy. And then to think of *him*, too ! Oh ! Emily, my dear and only friend ! I really know not how I shall support the trial. Would that I had never seen either of them ! And my dear father and mother too ! What will they say ? I know they have set their minds upon this match. But—it cannot be. When a man can stoop thus meanly to deceive a woman before marriage, even with her most particular friend, and under the same roof too, even in the house of her own parents—oh, it is vile ! What prospect of happiness can there be in such a union ?”

“But, perhaps, Mr. Audrey may not be quite so much to blame,” observed the kind-

hearted Emily, "he really was so agitated when he saw how you were frightened, that I don't think he knew exactly what he did, and very likely thought he assisted Charlotte as well as you?"

"Don't say anything in his favour," murmured Alicia; and then she heaved a sigh and continued, "I know the weakness of my own heart—but I am determined to act rightly, cost what it may. I must not allow myself to be blinded."

"But you know Charlotte has such romping ways," replied Emily, delighted at perceiving a glimpse of reconciliation between the lovers; "I dare say she was playing some of her foolish pranks with him, when he was obliged to hold her by the arms in that way, and forgot all about it afterward; for men are so strong they don't know how they hurt one sometimes." —And then she went on to relate how she was once pinched in a similar manner by her brother. What afterwards passed between them was little else than a repetition of invectives against their discarded friend.

In the mean while Charlotte, in the solitude of her own chamber, sought long in vain for some clue to unravel the mysteries of the past day. She endeavoured to recall to her mind every act she had committed, and if possible, every word she had spoken. All was to no purpose; as she seldom had any design either in acting or speaking, except the gratification of the moment, and, to her credit be it said, usually more for the gratification of others than her own, she was unable to make out any charge against herself. After puzzling much and uselessly, she at length exclaimed—"It must be so! How could I be so dull? Yes—it is evident! Alicia is jealous of me! Poor girl! That accounts for all. I have often heard ridiculous stories about people when they have given way to such feelings, but never could I have believed that anybody would have acted so *very* foolishly, and so *very* unworthily as Alicia has towards me. But I will forgive her, and show her by my conduct how much she has wronged me."

With this magnanimous resolution in her

head, and endeavouring to plan her arrangements for the morrow, Charlotte fell asleep. But though in this respect more fortunate than the rest of our little party, her slumbers were neither so uninterrupted nor so refreshing as usual; upon the whole, that was an unquiet night.

Thus, in consequence of our hero's first, and apparently most innocent exploit in his invisible character, the peace and comfort of a whole family were destroyed, the ardent friendship of young and affectionate hearts was broken, and a cloud, for the first time, began to gather over his own prospects in future life.

Similar consequences frequently occur in other families when their members unwisely lend their ears with implicit confidence to strangers.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY in the morning, after the rupture of the two very particular friends, the following note was slipped under the door of Miss Storer's bedroom.

“ ALICIA,

“ I have been thinking much of what passed between us last night, and the only conclusion I can come to is, that you are labouring under a delusion, which time alone can remove, and, take my word for it, that it will, for you are altogether wrong, I assure you ; but after what has passed, I can't think of staying any longer here ; so don't say a word about that, but let it seem as if we had settled the matter between ourselves in a friendly way, for I don't see why other people should be made uneasy about our

quarrels, and I know your father and mother would be so if they knew that my going to visit our old schoolfellow, Mary Williams, was only an excuse to get away from a place where I certainly never expected to have been so treated. She is at her father's house, near Oakham, and you know has been pressing me this long time to come and see her. So I shall go there, as if only for a day or two, and it will be very easy to find an excuse for not returning. I shall endeavour to appear as usual, just as if nothing had happened, when we meet at breakfast. I have ordered a chaise to 'be at the door exactly at eleven o'clock. I shall only say respecting what passed last night that you have used me in a manner for which you will be very sorry *some* day, but I wish you may be happy with all my heart. I cannot forget the time that is past—but I don't look upon you now to be *quite* yourself.

“CHARLOTTE.”

'This note was the subject of a conference between Alicia and Emily; and the result was,

that the latter pushed the following reply under the door of their rejected friend's chamber.

“ Miss Storer presents her compliments to Miss Read, and hopes Miss Read will enjoy herself with her friends near Oakham. Miss S. cannot pretend to enter into Miss R.'s reasons for supposing her to be *now* under a delusion, though she must confess that she *did* labour under one, the discovery of which has been extremely painful to her feelings. As Miss S. does not feel herself equal to *acting* her part in the breakfast-scene proposed by Miss R. she proposes to breakfast in her own room, where, if Miss R. thinks fit, she can come, *as if* to take leave. By this means Miss S. conceives that appearances may be saved equally as well as if she attempted to support a *character* before her parents, a line of *acting* which she has always deprecated.

“ P.S. As Miss S.'s boudoir has a communication with her chamber, Miss R. need not be under any apprehension of an unpleasant rencontre when entering the latter.”

Resolved to pity and forgive her deluded friend, the amiable girl stifled certain indignant and rebellious emotions, produced by this note, as well as possible, and made her appearance at the breakfast-table with a show of good spirits.

When she told her kind host and hostess of her intended visit to Miss Williams, they neither expressed surprise nor attempted to detain her; but merely said, that they hoped she would not be long away from them. The fact was, that their minds were greatly relieved by her communication, as it seemed to explain the coolness of the preceding day in a manner far more satisfactory to their feelings than they had anticipated. It now appeared to them that the misunderstanding was between their daughter and Charlotte, instead of being a quarrel between the lovers, and Mr. Storer very soon was himself again.

“Good girl, Charlotte,” said he, “come back soon, eh? You and Ally old friends—some nonsense between you though, I’m afraid—never mind—soon set that to rights—heart

all right — miss you when you're gone — used to have her own way too much, that's all — shouldn't have said that before you neither, Bernard, eh? — never mind, find it out soon enough, dare say."

Though Charlotte Read was a good girl, she is not our heroine; and therefore it will be unnecessary to enter into the detail of her feelings, when entering the deserted chamber of her late very particular friend, and remaining there alone for a few minutes, "as if to take leave."

Bernard Audrey purposely got out of the way, lest he should be seen handing her to her chaise; but he previously bade her "adieu" with such an unusual degree of emotion as quite startled her.

"I never saw him look at me in that manner before," thought she, immediately he left the room: "if I had, really I could almost have forgiven Alicia. And how he pressed my hand! He may have been foolish enough though, when I was not looking, for I never dreamt—I have treated him as if they were already married. But men, they say, are strange creatures, and

one's never quite sure of them. However, I'm glad I'm going—*that* will show them both that I will never act nor suffer myself to be acted upon unworthily."

During her journey towards Oakham, a little and but a very little of feminine vanity intruded itself, as she thought of Mr. Audrey's very particular manner towards her.

"At all events," said she, "it is plain that I have not offended *him*: and, *certainly*, I will not see either of them again till after the marriage, when, if they have common sense and the least rectitude of feeling, they will not hesitate to clear me from any foolish and unjust suspicion which Alicia now harbours against me."

Conscious of having acted right, she soon recovered her spirits in the midst of a fresh circle, where she was received with a cordiality strongly in contrast with the leave-taking of the morning.

Ernard Audrey, sitting gloomily alone, on a seat in the pleasure-ground, saw her depart, and sighed as he reflected upon the cause.

Then he rose, and began sauntering to and fro, and very soon despatched the easy task of self-justification.

“ I cannot blame myself !” he exclaimed : “ who could have imagined such a result from our foolish game ? However, I will take good care not to use my gift in future upon trifling occasions.”

His next effort was to see Alicia, and endeavour to persuade her to ride with him to Audrey Hall, where he understood his presence was necessary. The reply to his message was, that she did not feel well enough to ride out, but begged that she might not detain him.

Thus disappointed, he mounted his horse, not in the very best of humours, and very soon arrived at Audrey Hall, where he found fault with almost every thing that had been done since his last visit, to the great astonishment and dismay of the steward and the workpeople.

Leaving them to account for this sudden change in his temper, as they might, and not knowing what to do with himself, he commenced a solitary stroll in the park, sometimes

fancying that he would plant a clump of firs in one place, or have some trees cut down in another, but generally thinking of Alicia, and devising projects for regaining her confidence.

At length he found himself near the church, and remembered his intention to look over the monuments in it more minutely than he had hitherto done. Fortunately for his purpose, he discovered that the small side door was unlocked. He entered, uttering a malediction against the sexton for his carelessness: but was very soon lost to all other subjects among the family memorials, which alternately flattered his pride and excited his curiosity.

As he sate in deep reverie, contemplating a mutilated cross-legged figure in the chancel, he thought he heard a noise at the farther end of the building: but after listening attentively, and finding all was silent, he concluded that it must have been only imaginary, and continued his researches. The painted windows next attracted his attention; and he proceeded to take notes of the various impalements and quarterings, in order to trace them on the family

tree, which Sir William had ordered to be drawn and emblazoned, with all the various armorial bearings connected with it by consanguinity or intermarriage, in due heraldic splendour.

When this amusement was at an end, he was pleased and surprised to find that nearly two hours had elapsed. "I shall get back just in time to dress for dinner," said he, walking briskly to the side door by which he had entered the church. "Humph," he continued, on finding it locked, "I suppose I came in on the other side, then; no—this certainly is the same! How's this? It's very extraordinary! Very provoking!" and forthwith he proceeded from door to door, shaking them on their huge hinges, knocking, hallooing, and uttering many exclamations very unfit to be heard in such a place. But all were useless. It soon became too evident that he was most securely incarcerated; and then he recollected the noise that had startled him, and which he had foolishly attributed to fancy.

Now the said church was somewhat more

than a quarter of a mile from the village, and about double that distance from the hall, and it stood upon an eminence, the base of which was surrounded by fine old elm trees, above which the ancient square tower, with its immovable weathercock, was just apparent.

Our hero was, at first, half-vexed and half-amused at the oddity of his situation ; but, when he found that his knocking, and bawling, and door-shaking produced no effect, he began seriously to set his wits to work, in order to discover some means of escape. The windows were of the old gothic form, with their narrow compartments strongly grated. The smallest boy in the village could not have forced his way through the bars, where little square glazed doors were left open to admit the air ; so egress by their means was quite out of the question, and the only fruit of his most diligent search was the discovery of the reason of the door being unlocked when he entered. This was explained by the appearance of a newly-made grave in the church-yard, and the tools of the sexton, bearing the marks of recent service,

standing against the wall of the interior of the building.

“ I must make them hear me by some means,” exclaimed our hero ; “ and I don’t know a more likely method than this. So, here goes,” and he began pulling at one of the bell-ropes, which hung down to the floor of the tower. Among other whims at Oxford, he had once been of a party that endeavoured, most inharmoniously, to ring a peal, so that he was not altogether a novice in the mystery. After much exertion and one tumble, by which his “ white cords” were grievously soiled, he contrived to get his bell “ up,” and commenced a regular tolling. “ Capital exercise !” he exclaimed gaily. “ By George, I ’ll keep it up till the rascals come and let me out,” and on he went with his work most perseveringly, while the dismal sounds vibrating in the air, roused the attention of the neighbourhood, and caused no small panic in the breasts of many. Among the latter was the sexton, who had recently been busily engaged in the duties of his office. He declared he would not, he dared not, go by him-

self, to see what was the matter ; and forthwith summoned the churchwardens to attend. Curiosity attracted others, and the result was, that the sexton's forces were increased to the number of a dozen able-bodied men besides himself, ere he reached the door of the church, the bell still continuing to toll most dolefully.

The spot on which Bernard stood, exercising his new vocation, could not be seen from any of the windows ; but, as the party passed by them, he was made sensible of its arrival by the shadows falling upon the aisle and pillars, and perceived that there were many. A glance at his soiled habiliments, the idea of being the object of vulgar ridicule, and a notion that it would be an excellent joke to frighten the bumpkins, induced him suddenly to forget his previous determination, and to pull his left ear.

Scarcely had the consequent transformation taken place, than the door at the farther end of the church was opened, and the sexton and his attendants advanced to the extremity of the middle aisle, and saw the bell-rope regularly rising and falling, curving and straightening itself, all in the regular way of duty, and appa-

rently entirely of its own free-will and accord. The general consternation caused a precipitate retreat, and several tumbles, and much swearing, and divers very brief and devout ejaculations, were the consequence. Bernard enjoyed the joke exceedingly, and stuck close to his work, doubting not to witness other scenes of rustic and superstitious alarm. In the course of a minute or two, several of the boldest again advanced, and looked upon the extraordinary sight, while the sexton shouted for them to come away, as it was of no use for them to attempt to do anything till the parson arrived to lay the spirit.

“Don’t tell me about the parsons,” said Bernard’s gamekeeper, a stout, resolute fellow, who was now among the foremost: “Don’t tell me about parsons. Let us see what a double barrel and a steady hand will do! So, master ghost, or devil, or whatever else you please to call yourself, here’s at you!”

Bernard, at this alarming apostrophe, and the well-known clicking of the locks, instantly let go the bell-rope, which, flying at random, struck him violently across the face in his re-

treat. The moment afterwards, bang—bang, went the gamekeeper's fowling-piece; and our hero almost trembled at his narrow escape, as he perceived from the spot where the shots entered the huge door of the tower, that they must have passed exactly where he had been amusing himself. After this there was a dead silence. All, even the gamekeeper himself, seemed awe struck, as the bell-rope swung, vibrating, and leaping loosely to and fro, and gradually the deep tolling of the bell died away.

In this interval Bernard made the unpleasant discovery that he had not escaped quite scatheless. Drops of blood falling rapidly and becoming visible upon the ground, told him that now the bell-rope had effected the same injury on his unlucky nose, as, in his former invisible exploits had been produced by the head of a young lady. The only method of knowing how the bleeding was going on, or when it should have stopped, was, to keep shifting his head and looking upon the ground; and this process he continued for some time. But, when the

rustics began to summon courage and advance nearer, he felt that this must attract their notice, and would probably lead the desperate game-keeper to have a second shot at him. So, perceiving the side aisles deserted, he crept, on tip-toe, along one of them, stooping as he went, to avoid soiling his dress, if possible, got safely through the door, and made his way to a lone corner of the church-yard, where, leaning upon a head-stone, he watched till the falling tribute to his own folly had ceased. He then returned to the hall, where one room had been reserved for him; and, luckily, having the key in his pocket, he passed, unseen, through the throng of work-people, shut himself up, pulled his right ear, and set about his toilet. It appeared pretty certain, that, besides the contusion of his smelling organ, he would now find his personal attractions increased, by one black eye at least—perhaps a couple. Few trivial misfortunes are so ungentlemanlike and annoying as such discolourations. Poor Bernard tried every precautionary remedy that he could think of, ever and anon cursing the elderly pale-faced

gentleman and his boxes of ointment, and repeatedly vowing that he would let his ears alone for the future, except in cases of very great emergency. When he had made himself as decent as he possibly could, he had the mortification to discover, that, let him ride as he would, he must arrive at Maxdean Hall long after the hour of dinner. At any other time this would not have given him uneasiness; but, now there was a sort of breach between him and Alicia, he apprehended that any trifle might make it wider. The ill-humour with which he was afflicted, on his arrival, was as nothing when compared with that in which he left Audrey Park; and, as is too often the case, his horse suffered for the evil temper of its rider.

As he reached the door of Maxdean Hall, Mr. Storer threw up the window of the dining-room, and, thrusting forth his head, called out, "Come in just as you are—not half done—fish just gone out. Rode for it, I see—never mind—can't be always to a moment. Cursed work-people, I suppose—no doing anything with 'em—plague of one's life. Come in, come

in," and without waiting for any reply, the good-humoured host returned to his seat, and began to occupy himself in his duties of carving.

Bernard entered, and placing himself by the side of Alicia, anxiously inquired how she felt—hoped she was better, and would be able to take a walk after dinner. The manner in which he spoke appeared to produce the right effect. She turned towards him with a smile; but suddenly changed countenance, and exclaimed, "Why, Bernard! what is the matter with your eyes?"

"Eyes!" cried her father, looking up from his task of cutting up a goose. "Why, you've got a pair of black eyes, eh?—how's that?—turn up, eh? Didn't know you were a bruiser—fibber—what d'ye call 'em?—How was it?"

Bernard made up a story about striking himself against the bough of a tree.

"Tree!" said Mr. Storer, "always running against trees—very odd! Got a bloody nose yesterday that way. Look before you—sure it wasn't a mill—eh? Come, tell us all about it.

Don't like such ways—but never mind—dare say you were right—how was it?"

Bernard persevered in his misrepresentation, from the apparent impossibility of speaking the truth, and was not quite so much shocked at himself as on his first lapse of a similar kind. Mrs. Storer undertook to remove all unpleasant consequences before the morrow, and directed that he should have a piece of raw beef tied over each eye, when he went to bed, and that they should not be removed till the morning. Her husband proposed the application of leeches: but our hero gallantly said that he would put himself entirely into the hands of the lady.

To this decision he was led from the notion that he had lost quite blood enough lately, as well as by an apprehension that leeches would render it necessary to call in a medical man, who might discover that his bruises could scarcely have been caused by the branch of a tree.

Now Alicia Storer was not naturally of an obstinate, peevish, or sulky disposition, and had

therefore candidly allowed Emily's mode of accounting for her lover's misrepresentation to have its full weight on her mind. There was, indeed, something flattering in the idea that his anxiety respecting her should have been so great as to deprive him of all recollection concerning minor matters and other folks; moreover, she could not but admit the justice of her mother's observation that "an offer, so perfectly unobjectionable in every respect as that of Bernard Audrey, was not to be had every day."

Besides all the aforesaid reasons, there was another, which would most likely have done very well by itself, viz.—she really liked our hero. So, when they were walking together in the grounds after dinner, she gently referred to the subject; and he, being prepared by his clandestine visit, treated the affair very lightly, and said, "that nothing was more probable, than that Emily's account of his conduct was more correct than his own, since she had preserved her presence of mind, which certainly he had not."

"But then, when was it that you gave poor

Charlotte those dreadful pinches?" asked Alicia, with an affected air of gaiety.

"Really, I don't know," replied Bernard, telling another fib to bolster up those which had gone before. "Perhaps it was somebody else — though it *might* have been me, for you know how *very* much she is giving to romping. She is a very good girl, but, really, her spirits are almost too high — sometimes she is just like a mad creature. I remember holding her by the arms the day before yesterday, to prevent her from jumping upon the black pony, before Thomas had tightened the saddle girths, according to my order. It was the only way to prevent her from exposing herself to danger. I was obliged to hold her back very firmly, and perhaps I might then have 'pinched her,' as you say: but I hope she is not much hurt?"

In this detail there was, as is too common when people wish to deceive, a little truth for the basis. Charlotte was somewhat vain of her fearless horsemanship, and had declared that she never gave herself "the least concern about girths, and such sort of things."

It is needless to relate the rest of the conversation between the lovers, — suffice it to say, that the strange misunderstanding appeared to be entirely made up ere they again entered the house, and the worthy owners of the mansion were highly pleased to find their little circle again free, easy, and cheerful, as heretofore. But, when Bernard retired for the night, he could not help reflecting upon the follies and escapes of the day. And when he lay upon his pillow, with the bandage and lumps of beef upon his eyes, he endeavoured to count the number of aberrations into which he had lapsed from that strict rule of truth-telling, which had ever guided him till his interview with the white-faced elderly gentleman in the arbour.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Mrs. Storer, the two young ladies, and Bernard, were taking an airing in the carriage next day, they were met by the Reverend Mr. Kenemall, the rector of Audrey, who immediately pulled up his low four-wheeled chaise, and paid his respects, in a manner which clearly evinced that he no longer considered the Storers as "nobodies."

"I was driving over to Maxdean Hall," said he, after the usual formal inquiries, "in order to call upon Mr. Audrey, and tell him of a very singular occurrence that took place yesterday at our church, and has set the whole parish in an uproar."

As he said these words, he cast an arch smile at our hero, who, expecting to hear some odd version of the rustics' alarm, had prepared him-

self accordingly, and sate with a look of the most innocent curiosity imaginable, while inquiring the particulars.

“It is rather a long story to tell you in the middle of the road,” replied the rector; “I will, therefore, ride forward, to call upon Mr. Storer, and you shall have the whole on your return, if you wish it.”

“Accept my invitation to stop and dine with us,” said Mrs. Storer; “you cannot refuse a lady—and I am sure Mr. Storer will be delighted. Nothing pleases him so much as when a gentleman drops in and takes us in the family way.”

Mr. Kenemall bowed, and accepted the invitation, not a little gratified at having so good an excuse as a lady’s interference to plead for a breach of the strict rules of etiquette.

“Reserve your story till we come!” exclaimed Mrs. Storer, good-humouredly; “we shall just have time to dress before dinner. I see it is something droll that you have to tell, by your looks. So—mum to Mr. Storer, mind. Let us all enjoy it together.—Drive on, Peter!”

“What can it be? Have you any idea, Bernard?” exclaimed Alicia.

“Not the least,” replied our hero, scarcely heeding the downright falsehood which he was telling. Such is the force of habit.

“It’s very strange what it can be!” continued Alicia; “something that took place in the church yesterday, Mr. Kenemall says. Why, you were in the church yesterday, you told me, looking at the monuments. Did you see anything particular?”

“No—nothing more than usual,” answered Bernard, carelessly; “but it is of no use guessing, we shall have it all at dinner. It can’t be very dreadful, or the parson would not wear that laughing face about it.”

“I long to hear what it is!” said Emily.

“So do I,” added Mrs. Storer.

“Let us guess!” cried Alicia; “I expect it is something about a ghost.”

“Very likely,” observed her mother, “for the people in this neighbourhood are very superstitious.”

While the ladies were employed in various

conjectures, our hero congratulated himself upon the prospect of deriving amusement from his late exploit.

“It would be a hard case indeed,” thought he, “if I were to be shot at and knocked about, as I have been, without some little recompense. I dare say the bumpkins have made a fine story of it! Well,” he continued, as he looked on the animated countenances of his companions, “it is something, after all, to have the gift of invisibility! If it got me into difficulty, it likewise helped to get me out of it, and now, I expect, will afford us some rare fun. I shall, however, be more circumspect in future as to how I make use of my power, and have recourse to it only on particular occasions.”

Their morning ride terminated, as Mrs. Storer had planned, just in time to allow of their dressing for dinner; and when the ladies had retired for that purpose, the reverend Mr. Kenemall asked Bernard if he could spare a few minutes, as he had something very particular to say to him.”

“Certainly,” replied our hero; “it is now

only half past four, and a quarter of an hour will be quite sufficient for my toilet."

"You will not, I trust, be offended with me, my dear Sir," said the Rector, again smiling archly as before; "but I remember how it was when I was at Oxford. We used to divert ourselves with many a strange prank. It is natural, very natural, with youth and high spirits; it can scarcely be otherwise. So I thought, perhaps—but I hope you will not feel hurt at my plain manner of speaking?"

"Assuredly not," replied Bernard. "Pray make yourself perfectly easy on that score. You were saying you 'thought perhaps'—"

"The fact is," resumed Mr. Kenemall, "that I wished to know whether you really had any hand in the affair of yesterday, before I mentioned it to the ladies. I confess that I do not see how you could, because, although you were seen near the church about two hours earlier than the thing happened, the workmen all declare that you were in your own room at the hall during the whole of the time, as a party of them were at work on the stairs, and therefore

you could not have entered without their seeing you."

"I certainly was in my own room a long while," replied Bernard; "indeed I was so busily engaged looking over some papers, that I didn't observe how time went, and was consequently too late for dinner. But you have not yet informed me what it is of which I am suspected?"

"Suspected! Oh, my dear Sir! pray don't use such a word!" exclaimed Mr. Kenemall, laughing. "The thing is so exceedingly ridiculous! I have not common patience with the fools! and yet it is altogether a most unaccountable piece of business!"

"Well, but you have not told me what it is," said our hero, laughing also.

"I'll tell you," continued Mr. Kenemall, holding his sides; "I'll tell you, my dear Sir, as — soon — as — I — can — oh! Oxonians are always fond of frolics, and so I thought, perhaps you might have taken it into your head to toll the church-bell. There, that's the whole of the affair! Oh dear! I can't help laughing!"

“Why, even if I had been disposed to do such a foolish thing,” replied Bernard, “by your own account I was more than half a mile off, in my own room?”

“Yes, yes; to be sure,” said the rector: all that I wished was to be certain that you neither did it yourself nor employed any one else to do it. Now the one I see is impossible —”

“And I give you my word of honour,” said our hero, interrupting him, “that I never employed anybody to do anything of the kind.”

Mr. Kenemall proceeded to make many apologies for the liberty which he had taken in asking so many questions, and so consumed the rest of the quarter of an hour to which their interview was limited.

The reverend visiter took an opportunity before dinner of whispering to his hostess that he should wish to defer his tale till the cloth was drawn and the servants had left the room, as what he had to relate was of such a nature as scarcely became the gravity of his profession. This delay increased the curiosity of the little

party to the highest degree, and afforded no small gratification to Bernard, who anticipated a ludicrous account of the bumpkins' terror.

When the appointed time of recitation came, Mr. Storer insisted upon a bumper all round, to fortify their nerves, and then Mr. Kenemall commenced.

“What I am going to tell you is one of those unaccountable things which we read of in books of fiction, concerning the agency of ghosts and spirits. But we shall no doubt find a clue to unravel the mystery some of these days, for I am firmly of opinion that when the soul leaves the body — but I see you are impatient, so I will relate to you exactly what was told to me by my clerk, who is likewise the sexton of the parish, a situation which he has now held for more than twenty years, and borne the character of a perfectly veracious person, though withal, it must be confessed, not a little given to superstitious fancies, being a firm believer in ghosts, witches, apparitions, old women's prophecies, and all that sort of thing.”

The rector then went on to relate, in a some-

what roundabout way, how the said sexton had, on the previous morning, been employed in digging a grave for a labouring man then lying dead, and how that, after finishing his work he had deposited his tools in the church, and then locked the door, and was confident that there was no human being there but himself. Then followed a description of the alarm created by the tolling of the bell, the "gathering" of the stout hearts of the village, their progress to the church, what they saw and heard on their entrance, and so forth, till the time when the gamekeeper fired his double-barrel, and the bell was instantly released from its enchantment.

Here Mr. Storer could contain himself no longer, but burst into a loud fit of laughter, and then exclaimed, "A capital joke, I vow!—well managed, eh? Too late for dinner yesterday, Bernard—smell a rat. Been to look at the old monuments, eh? Never mind—good story—well got up. Like to have seen the whopstraws. Catch the idea, Mr. Cantemall, eh?"

"No—really, sir," replied the reverend gentleman, "you are quite wrong there, I assure

you, for I had some little notion of the same sort myself, but the evidence of more than twenty workpeople can prove that Mr. Audrey was in his own room all the time. And besides, Mr. Audrey has assured me, upon his word of honour, that he had no hand, directly or indirectly, in the transaction."

Though this was not exactly the case, Bernard could not very well recall to the rector's mind the precise extent of his denial, so he bowed in assent, and consequently stood pledged, by his word of honour as a gentleman, to the truth of a conscious and downright falsehood.

"Hem!" said Mr. Storer, "that alters the case. Can't doubt Bernard's word—uncle told me never caught him in a lie, even when a boy—great thing to say, eh? All right—hate liars. Man once begins to tell lies, all up—steal, cheat, swindle—anything after that, eh?"

Mr. Kenemall professed himself to be precisely of the same way of thinking, and was proceeding to enlarge upon the hatefulness of a vice, which destroyed all confidence between

relatives and friends ; but the ladies would not submit to be edified upon any other subject till he had fairly got to the end of his story. He, therefore, resumed—" Timothy Higgins, the clerk and sexton, declares, that after the bell was released from the hands of the invisible agent, a strong smell of sulphur arose and filled the whole of the church. Now this is a usual part of most of your stories about apparitions and so forth, but, in the present case, it is very easily to be accounted for by the discharge of the gamekeeper's fowling-piece. What followed, however, is much more extraordinary. When the men had recovered from their alarm sufficiently to enter the tower, one of them discovered a quantity of blood, which seemed to have just fallen on the pavement. This struck them with a fresh panic. Mr. Audrey's gamekeeper shuddered and turned pale, and the rest betook themselves to praying, with a fervency which, I am afraid, they don't often practise."

" Well, I suppose they soon found the fellow who was wounded !" said Mr. Storer. " Egad, I hope he didn't pay too dear for his joke—

capitally done—be sorry if he was hurt much, eh?”

“No, sir,” continued the rector; “they found no one, yet the blood was fresh, quite fresh spilt, and as if on purpose that no doubt should be left on that point, some of it was shed on the tools of the sexton, which he had just been using to dig the grave, and the rest was close by; so, if it had been there when he left the church two hours before, he *must* have seen it.”

“Phoo!” exclaimed Mr. Storer; “some sly fellow among themselves. Very easy to keep up a joke once set a-going—confederacy—eh, Bernard? Don’t you catch the idea, eh?—Well done, though.”

“There is no doubt,” resumed Mr. Kenemall, “that there is some trick at the bottom of the affair, but the most unpleasant part remains to be told. After wondering and trembling where they were for some time, the men discovered traces of blood along one of the side aisles, and following the track, it led them to a grave on the north side of the churchyard, on

which they found more stains, exactly of the same kind as those in the interior of the tower. These last were likewise perfectly fresh, and must, according to the opinion of a butcher who was present, have been made when they were in the church. But no person was to be seen, except two or three old women, who had followed out of curiosity, and who declared that they had been standing opposite to the tomb in question, and so near, that they must have seen any one who had come there."

"Ay, that butcher's the boy!" cried Mr. Storer. "Bladder—give it a sly squeeze, eh?—well done though. Ride over to-morrow—have a talk to him—cunning chap that—droll dog, I'll warrant. Get it out of him somehow."

"He carries it off well if he did it," continued the rector, "for he seems quite as much alarmed as the rest. I saw him this morning, and he was in such a tremor as hardly to be able to go about his business. But I am going before my story. The men remained gazing for a minute or two upon what they saw on the grave, and then the poor sexton, clapping his hand

upon his forehead, cried out, ‘ Then it’s too true; murder will out!’ and fell down in a fit: the rest of them got the poor fellow home as well as they could, and when he came to himself, he begged them to send for me, as he was sure he should die. I went, of course, immediately, and then he told me the strange story which I have just related, and added that the grave on which the recent blood-stains were seen, was that of a labourer who had been found murdered some years ago in a wood, and that strong suspicions were attached at the time to the man who is now about to be buried. I desired him to keep his own counsel; but unfortunately the matter has spread, and this morning I find that the whole of the village have got it that the murdered man literally came bleeding out of his grave to toll the knell of his murderer!”

“ How very dreadful!” exclaimed Alicia. “ I almost wish I hadn’t heard it. How pale you look, Emily!”

“ And so do you,” said Mrs. Storer. “ Here, take my smelling-bottle.”

“Don’t be foolish, my dear Ally,” exclaimed her father. “It will all end like the other ghost stories—Cock Lane—Sampford Peverell—all humbug. But a joke’s a joke—mustn’t let it go too far. Go over to-morrow—consider poor man’s family—innocent, dare say—got enemies—suspect the butcher—see about in the morning. Go, won’t you, Bernard?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied our hero, “if you wish it.”

“If I wish it!” cried Mr. Storer. “Why it’s your duty, man. Think of the poor fellow’s family. Father’s good name everything to children—particularly poor. Left a widow and children, eh, Mr. Ketchemall?”

“No, sir,” replied the rector. “He lost his wife about three years since, but he has left five small children, the eldest nine years of age, and I am happy to say that his mother, who has latterly lived with him, is in very comfortable circumstances, and able to support them. She was for many years a confidential housekeeper in the family of a gentleman, who left her an

annuity at his death ; and she is a most worthy woman, constant in her attendance at church, and altogether respectable."

"Then her peace of mind shall not be destroyed by such tom-foolery !" exclaimed Mr. Storer warmly ; and striking the table, "Hang me if I suffer it—go to the bottom of it. *Beyond* a joke when it comes to *that*. Why, Bernard, you look as pale as the girls ! Don't believe in ghosts and hobgoblins, eh ? Not such a fool, hope ? Cursed stuff and humbug ! Dead man's dead—no more walking then—wish it wasn't so—some of 'em owe me a pretty deal of money—know that. Like to see 'em."

"Pray, papa, don't talk in that manner," cried Alicia ; "you quite terrify one. Do pray let us have candles."

"Do pray swallow that glass of madeira," said her father. "That's the stuff for sending your blue-devils a scampering. Can't stand that, eh, Mr. Catemall ? Prefer port, eh ? No ceremony—do as you like here. Give Miss Hitchins a glass of madeira. Bernard, take

care of my wife. Know the old saying? vulgar, perhaps, but very true, ‘ When you want to steal a young pig, tickle the old un, eh ? ’ ”

It was in vain that the worthy gentleman endeavoured to rally the spirits of the little party. A dullness appeared to hang over all; and once or twice Bernard perceived that Alicia shuddered involuntarily, and then put her hand to her forehead. It was too evident that she possessed not the happy incredulity of her father on the subject of apparitions and the mysterious agency of the dead.

“ How easily could I set her mind at ease if I dare ! ” thought her lover : “ but then what would be the consequences ? ” and endeavouring to trace them, he was soon lost in a reverie.

Mrs. Storer and Emily seemed equally engaged in pondering upon what they had heard, and even the ceremonious rector was now and then most unpolitely absent.

When the ladies retired, Mr. Storer made another effort to rouse his visitors from their lethargy, and succeeded, to a certain extent, with the calculating incumbent of Audrey, who

looked forward to the marriage of the baronet that was to be, the hospitalities of the hall, &c. and resolved to make himself agreeable company. Bernard very soon excused himself from taking more wine, and followed the ladies.

As soon as his back was turned, Mr. Kenemall observed, "A very amiable and worthy young gentleman, sir. I assure you he bears the best of characters. I have a letter from his tutor, a very intimate friend of mine, speaking of him in the highest terms. I shall be happy to show it you some day, when you favour me with a call."

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye," replied Mr. Storer. "Ought to have called on you before—know that very well. Hope you don't take it amiss—don't mean to offend anybody. High respect for the church—always had—brought up so—but hate ceremony. Always glad to see you, however, in a family way. Give you a call, however; come to-morrow."

"I shall be most happy to receive you, my dear sir," said the rector, endeavouring to fall into the worthy merchant's free and easy man-

ner. "I assure you that I am no more a lover of ceremony than yourself, and should be very glad to shake it off entirely; but men of my profession are under the necessity of being extremely cautious, lest they should offend the prejudices of others. I have heard instances of people absenting themselves from church, merely because the clergymen omitted some point of etiquette."

"A pack of fools!" exclaimed Mr. Storer. "Etiquette! cursed nonsense! Heart's all—soon see if a man likes your company—ought to know best how you like his. If not, don't go—don't ask—no offence—can't be hand and glove with everybody, eh?"

"There's an old saying, sir," observed the rector, "that 'when a man has got the forehorse of the team by the head,'—you'll excuse the coarseness of the simile, I hope?"

"Ay, ay," said the merchant smiling, "None the worse for that. Like good old sayings—deal of truth in 'em. '*Multum in parvo*,' as we used to say at school. Come, sir, fill your glass!"

Mr. Kenemall obeyed the order, and then resumed, "Well, sir, 'When a man has once got the fore-horse by the head,' the proverb goes on to say, that 'he can lead him and go just as he pleases,' but mark me, the rest of the horses must *follow*. Now that is exactly the difference between a gentleman of Mr. Storer's wealth and independence and a humble country parson."

This adroit tickling of his host on his most sensitive point, produced a smile, a certain twinkling of the eyes, and the following reply:—

"Well, well, something in that, I see. Can't do as you would: sorry for it—managed very well, though. Seemed to be a favourite, I thought, that day at the fête—not with me, though, tell you plainly—too much buckram. Like you better now—no nonsense. Stopped to dinner in a family-way. Come and see you, shouldn't otherwise."

Seizing the opportunity, Mr. Kenemall said,—"Why not to-morrow? You are coming over to the Hall. If you'll take things just as you find them? I can't pretend to entertain

you in the same style as you live in at home — but just a plain joint and a glass of old port—”

“Humph,” quoth Mr. Storer; “I’m determined to get to the bottom of that business—give me more time. Not a bad notion. What time do you dine?”

“Any hour you please,” replied the rector.

“Don’t like that,” said the merchant; “hate ceremony, mind. What’s your usual hour?”

“Five o’clock,” answered Mr. Kenemall. “I trust that Mrs. Storer and the young ladies, and Mr. Audrey, will likewise do me the honour to be of the party. I am sure Mrs. Kenemall will be highly delighted, for she dislikes formality as much as myself, and really we have so much of it.”

“Can’t answer for them,” observed Mr. Storer—“Speak to ’em yourself—Bernard will, dare say.”

When the rector made his invitation formally in the drawing-room, Mrs. Storer very briefly replied, that she left the matter entirely with her husband, and would dine wherever he thought fit to take her.

“Then it’s all settled, Parson?” said the

worthy magistrate, rubbing his hands. "That 's the way we do things — all one way—bundle of sticks, eh? Wife follows me, Ally follows the wife; Bernard follows Ally, and Emmy won't be such a fool as to stay at home by herself—will you, my little pet? Mind, no ceremony—plain joint—no fuss—find it out if you do—won't come any more."

Mr. Kenemall assured him that he need not apprehend anything on that score, and then took leave, and rode home not a little pleased with the events of the day, by which he found himself on such a familiar footing with those who would shortly form the principal family in his parish.

Mr. Storer amused himself for some time in laughing at the joke of the bell-puller, and Bernard affected to join in his merriment; but the ladies were not disposed to be so sceptical, and begged them to desist from ridiculing so serious a subject.

"Well, well," said Mr. Storer, "you'll laugh yourselves at it to-morrow. I'll ferret out the ghost — this 'll raise him, I 'll warrant," and he jingled the money in his purse.

CHAPTER VII.

“IT was a fine morning, when the family from Maxdean Hall took their departure for Audrey. The barouche was thrown open, and Bernard and the ladies occupied the inside, as Mr. Storer declared that he would sit upon the box, in order to look about him. His real motive, however, was to have some talk with his old coachman, Peter, a thorough-bred metropolitan sceptic in all matters concerning ghost-craft. It struck the merchant that Peter might pick up something let fall by accident at the public-house, and which might not be uttered in the presence of his superiors. So, after relating the strange story, he gave his instructions, and ventured to hint his suspicions of the butcher.

“ Wery likely, master,” said Peter ; “ they ’re queer chaps, them butchers — always a larking. I cotched von of ’em vonce running away with my vip, and he pretended as he thought it vos his own — but I ’ll see vot I can make on ’im, you may depend upon ’t, Sir. Tst, tst ! Vot are you arter, ye warments ? The beastesses has taken to shying lately. Can’t think vot ’s come to ’em. Never did so in Lunnun.”

“ Fancy they see ghosts, mayhap,” observed Mr. Storer.

“ Ha, ha ! wery good, Sir ; shouldn’t wonder !” said Peter laughing, as in duty bound, at his master’s joke. “ But, my eyes ! vot ignora-musses them bumpkins be ! Von of ’em axed me t’other day if the East Hinges vosn’t in Lunnun !”

“ Well, you set him right, I hope, Peter ?” asked his master. “ Told him where it was. What did you say, eh ? Where do *you* think it is ?”

“ Why, it ’s — abroad — to be sure !” replied Peter, with a knowing look, and a useless flourish of his whip.

This, and similar specimens of his coachman's knowledge and conscious superiority over the bumpkins, brought Mr. Storer in high spirits to Audrey Hall.

The rector had perched a boy up in a tree which commanded the view of a distant turn in the road, in order to give timely notice of the approach of "the family." The consequence was that Mr. and Mrs. Kenemall were waiting at the entrance of the park to welcome their expected guests, and invite them to take some refreshment at the rectory.

"Not for me ! not for me," said Mr. Storer. "Ladies do as they like. Shall walk to the church ; business first, eat by and by. Good appetite ; soon see that when I begin ; but business first : look at the premises, eh ? You'll come, won't you ?"

"I shall be most happy to accompany you," replied the rector.

The ladies now, either influenced by curiosity or the cheerfulness of the weather, seemed to have shaken off their superstitious fears, and resolved to join the reconnoitering party.

As they walked slowly across the park, Mr. Storer contrived to get the rector about a stone's throw before the rest, and then inquired if he had made any progress towards the discovery of the hoax, as he termed it.

“Not the least,” replied Mr. Kenemall gravely; “but I am sorry to tell you that the consequences begin to wear a more serious aspect. The poor man was to have been buried yesterday, but I was informed then that there was some disappointment about the bearers: so the funeral was deferred till this morning; and now the belief of his being really a murderer is so strong and so general, that there isn't a man to be found who is willing, or, perhaps, who dare assist in carrying the corpse to the grave. But the worst of the affair is, the dreadful effect which all this has produced on the mind of the mother of the deceased. The attention she gave to her son during his illness, had visibly impaired her own health, and the shock which she received at his death was very great. I am grieved to say that now the prevalent report has reached her ears, and wrought so powerfully

both upon her mind and body, that our medical man has just been telling me the worst consequences may be apprehended if her mind is not speedily relieved. I have, therefore, sent off to the neighbouring villages to procure bearers, and hope, in the course of the day we shall be able to get through the ceremony."

"Let it be done directly," exclaimed Mr. Storer. "Bear it myself—strong enough. Bernard and I—my two servants—plenty. Come along. Go back—where is it?"

"Your proposal does infinite credit to your feelings, my dear sir," said the rector; "but pray don't turn back. I see we have already attracted the attention of the ladies."

"Never mind, never mind," resumed Mr. Storer; "poor woman dying, perhaps—no ceremony—bad at any time—cruel now. Come, we'll carry the poor man."

"I cannot suffer it," observed Mr. Kenemall, taking the merchant by the arm, and leading him forward. "It was not my intention to have told you, but it is now necessary to say, that circumstances have transpired which attach

a very strong suspicion to the character of the deceased, and leave it at least doubtful whether he were the murderer or not."

"Very extraordinary—very extraordinary," muttered Mr. Storer. "Alters the case, certainly—don't believe in ghosts though—*won't* believe—all humbug that. Somebody in the secret, though—have it sifted—send for an officer—Bow-street—must tell Bernard. Here, Bernard," he exclaimed; "come here—want to speak to you. Don't want the women. Little plan we've got—find out the bottom of this business somehow. Mr. Kenemall will tell you all about it. Who's that following the women?"

"That's Timothy, my clerk, with the keys of the church," replied the rector.

"Humph!" said Mr. Storer. "Go and have some talk with Timothy. You tell Bernard about the poor woman—joke's a joke—fellow's a scoundrel now, whoever he is. Woman die, shouldn't wonder." Saying these words, he went back, or rather continued to lounge where he was, till the ladies came up, when he saluted them very briefly, and said he

meant to have a chat with the clerk, in hopes of hearing something more about “raw head and bloody bones. Go on—go on,” he continued “never mind me—busy now—like to go through with a thing—once begin, not stop—no time to be polite now—find it all out. Here, Timothy—want to hear what you think of this business. Don’t be in a hurry—plenty of time. Women walk like turtles—soon catch ’em again. I say, old gentleman, who do *you* suspect is at the bottom of this trick?”

Timothy shook his head very dolefully, and replied, “I wish your honour could prove that it was a trick.”

“Hope I shall—mean to do so. Been humbugged, Tim—all humbugged. Come, who’s the drollest fellow here? Every village got a wag—joker—or what you please to call him.”

Timothy could not name any one liable to suspicion, and so Mr. Storer, to save time, spoke of the butcher, and asked if he was not sometimes given to joking?

“Why, as for that,” replied the clerk, “can’t say he wasn’t a little given that way some years

agone, but he's always been very steady like since he's been married, and got three children, and another a coming."

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Storer; "set him a thinking, I'll warrant—find 'em something to eat—no joke that. So he's never merry *now*; always dull, eh?"

"Why I can't say that," answered Timothy, "because you see he is often obligated to go to fairs, and such like places, and he brings home news of what's going on in the world; and so, as his father keeps the public-house, why it's natural as he should entertain his customers a bit."

This was quite enough for the sanguine hearer to build his hopes upon. "Oho!" thought he; "regular purveyor of fun for the country club. Landlord's son—dare say old boniface has got off some of his sour beer by this hoax—see it all now." Then, addressing the clerk, he said, "Never mind me—you go on with the keys. Tell 'em I am gone into the village—forgot something—want to see my coachman—shall come back here, or, perhaps,

go to the parsonage—see church another time—can't stop now.” And turning about, he began to retread his steps, and, in due course, reached the shop of the butcher, who was at the time busily engaged in the duties of his vocation.

“Morning, butcher,” said Mr. Storer, whose habit when he took anything in hand, was to go to the point at once. “Don't leave off chopping—business first, and when that's done, want to have a few words with you.”

Now George Burrows, the butcher, was a very active and honest fellow, about eight-and-twenty years of age, and married to a tidy industrious woman, some three years younger. But, strive as he would, the poor were unable to buy much meat, and let the quality be what it might, he had found it impossible to induce his richer neighbours to eat more than a certain quantity. His father, the publican, too, who might have been his best customer, had, for some time, been going back in the world, as some said, from inattention, others from mismanagement; but all agreed, partly from the too frequent habit of drinking. The con-

sumption of the staple commodities sold by each, was greatly increased in consequence of the repairs and alterations in progress at "The Hall."

The arrival and employment of so many workpeople had been quite a "God send" to the Burrowses, who were before nearly upon the point of coming to a "stand still." George, on this occasion, stirred himself most manfully; and the goodness of his character induced the graziers and farmers, who were his creditors, to trust him still farther, when they beheld a probability that he would be able, by his increased trade, to work himself out of his difficulties. So George kept working away, and was just beginning to reap the fruits of his praiseworthy exertions. The house in which he lived was on the Audrey estate. He had paid up all arrears of rent, and got rid of one or two minor and importunate creditors, and his dear Sally had recovered her smiles and blooming looks, and bustled as briskly as ever about her domestic duties.

Such was the precise state of things when

Mr. Storer suprised him by entering his shop. The first idea that struck the honest fellow was, that his visiter had come to speak to him about a lease, for which he had made application to the steward. The great London merchant, he knew, must be a man of business; and nothing seemed more likely than that he should interest himself in the affairs of his son-in-law elect. With this impression, he showed Mr. Storer into his little back parlour, where the latter immediately seated himself on a chair, leaned upon his gold-headed cane, and desired the butcher to take a seat likewise. He then began the conversation, by observing,

“ Dare say you wonder what I’m come about—think it very foolish when I tell you, mayhap. Never mind—I’ve my reasons—strong enough too. Dare say you’re good sort of man—no right to think otherwise—fond of a joke, though, eh? Gone too far—must come out now—forgive all then—get poor woman well. Let’s know how it was—repent it if you don’t—tell you *that* plainly. No more legs of mutton and

sirloins to the hall — no, no — love truth — hoax very well — very good — cleverly done — gone by now — how did you manage it ?”

The butcher of course expressed great surprise, and asserted his utter ignorance concerning the transaction alluded to, farther than that he was one of the party who went to the church, and declared he hadn't been his “own man ever since.”

Mr. Storer was at first incredulous: but the repeated assertions of the butcher were made with such an air of honest frankness, mingled with somewhat of offended pride at having his word doubted, that it became at length impossible to suspect his veracity.

“Well, well,” said the merchant, “say no more — beg your pardon — wasn't you, I see — must be somebody, though — ghost all humbug — find it out somehow. Foolish frolic — wicked *now* — woman's dying — if she does — fellow's a murderer.”

He then proceeded to request Burrows to assist him in sifting the affair to the bottom

and showing him a five-pound note, told him it should be his if he succeeded. George promised to do every thing in his power, and said there was no occasion for any reward, as it would be a very great relief to his own mind, if he could prove that it was only a trick : but he shook his head incredulously, as much as to say that it was impossible for thirteen people to be deceived in broad daylight.

In the mean while, our hero had been plunged into the utmost perplexity, and even horror, at the now serious consequences of his invisible frolic. The poor woman's danger pressed heavily upon his mind, and he was several times on the point of declaring himself guilty. But then he had given his word of honour that he knew nothing of the transaction ; and, besides, the woman might recover — and, besides that, the “ circumstances which had transpired ” relative to the character of her son, could not be changed by his confession. So he continued silent and moody, endeavouring to devise some scheme to set all right again, and repeatedly vowing within himself, that if he could but

get out of this scrape, he would never again wantonly make use of his invisible secret.

As the ladies were in due form shown the yet visible traces of what had occurred, and listened to the horrifying details given in a low mysterious tone by the yet trembling Timothy, Bernard endeavoured to rally and make light of the affair. But there was that in his manner which convinced all present of a change in his own opinions since the preceding evening.

“Hush !” said Alicia, when he had uttered some frivolous remark, “you do not think as you speak. I see by your looks, I know by the tone of your voice, that your mind is as uneasy as any of ours, respecting this mysterious transaction.”

“I own that I am concerned for its consequences,” replied her lover ; “I am sorry for the poor woman who is so ill. But I am sure, *quite* sure that the whole is nothing more than a foolish trick, planned by somebody to frighten these simple villagers.”

“You may well call it a foolish trick,” ob-

served Alicia, gravely, "but if the poor woman should die, he who has played it will be neither more nor less than a murderer."

"I will go and see how she is directly," exclaimed Bernard.

"Good heavens! Stop—stop!" cried Alicia, "Mamma! dear mamma! Look at Bernard! How pale he is! How horrid he looks!"

"Let me go!" exclaimed our hero, "I am quite well—I *must* see the poor woman. She shall have the best of advice."

They were at this time in the churchyard; and tearing himself from the ladies, he sprang over the fence, and ran, scarcely knowing where, through the park.

"It is very good of the young squire," muttered the old clerk, "very good of him—but—" and he shook his grey head mournfully, as if he could have said more.

This was not lost upon the rector, who was what the country folks call "a dear lover of news," and suffered few opportunities to escape him, which promised to furnish any little matter for "chit-chat."

Accordingly, when his wife and her fair visitors had entered the park, and

Homeward wound their melancholy way,

he detained his ancient Timothy, under the pretext of speaking to him about the funeral, and inquired of him the meaning of the afore-said shaking of the head, and a sort of sigh by which it had been accompanied. After some little demur, the poor man said that he had had some conversation with a very aged woman in the village, and that she had repeated to him certain prophecies, which she recollected to have heard in her youth, and which boded no good to the Audrey family. Upon being questioned as to their import, he repeated the following,

When it comes to pass that, on Audrey's bell,
The murdered shall pull the murderer's knell,
And the great bell tolls, by unseen hands,
Then Audrey's heir shall lose his lands.

Mr. Kenemall inquired if he had ever heard of the said prophecy before.

"No, I can't say that ever I did," replied Timothy; "but old Patty Pegg says, it's just as

fresh upon her memory as if she had been just told it: and yet she was quite a girl when she heard it first."

"That is as she fancies, perhaps," observed the rector, "but her memory is none of the best; and what she has heard about this bell-pulling affair has most likely set her a-dreaming."

Timothy shook his head again, and replied, "But then, sir, how did she get it into rhyme? People don't dream in verse—leastwise, not such unletterate people as her."

"Phoo, phoo!" said Mr. Kenemall, "anybody may string a few jingling rhymes together."

"Not quite so easy as you may think," observed Timothy, who had with great toil and labour immortalized himself, as far as the durability of certain chiselled head-stones would go towards immortality.—"Not quite so easy as you may think, if so be as how you never tried. I don't know what I should have done for a rhyme to my poor brother Peter's name, if it hadn't been as he married

Polly Wiggins, and so Higgins and Wiggins came in nicely; but I couldn't hit upon a rhyme for butcher, and so was obligated to leave out his trade. I thought of 'soldier,' but then he subscribed to a club, when he was drawed for the militia, and so got off with a substitute, and never went near the army."

"Talking of butchers," said the rector —
"How is George Burrows going on?"

"Why," replied Timothy, "he's picking up his crumbs again, as we say." And then he went on, in his own style, giving an account of the butcher, which amounted to much the same as has been already related.

"He used to be fond of idle sports before he was married," resumed the rector; "but some time ago he appeared out of spirits. I suppose his late good luck has revived them?"

"Why, yes; he's not much call to fret now," answered Timothy. "I wish my trade war as good."

"Why, surely," exclaimed Mr. Kenemall, "You don't wish all your neighbours to die, that you may have the pleasure of digging their graves?"

“No,” said Timothy, “I don’t mean that trade; I means the school. A pretty many scholars have I lost since that national consarn was set a-going. I can’t say I thinks it’s quite right for gentlefolks to come and take the bread out of one’s mouth, without giving one no sort of satisfaction whatsoever.”

This was a subject which the rector always dreaded; for though the Dashforts, and other fashionable charitables, had acknowledged that “the poor fellow’s was a hard case, and *really something* ought to be done for him,” nothing had been done. So, in reality, the unlucky man gave more towards the “National” school than all the “voluntary” subscribers. They bestowed what they would scarcely miss, while he was deprived of the main stay and chief support of his old age; for the most lucrative part of his practice, as the village barber, had long since gone the way of perriwigs and hair powder, and every one knows that the dignity of parish clerk and sexton is seldom upheld by any extravagant stipend.

“I have not forgotten your case, Timothy,”

said Mr. Kenemall, "and meant this very day to speak to Mr. Audrey in your favour. But I am sadly afraid, now, that the minds of the whole family will be too much occupied with this strange business and poor Martha's illness. When they come to live at the Hall, however, you may expect something to be done. But I was just going to say, that I have a strong notion that George Burrows knows more about this matter than any of you think, and if you could contrive to get it out of him, you'd not only be doing a very good action, but would raise yourself much in the opinion of those who can render you the most essential service."

Timothy repeated his conviction that the butcher knew no more of the matter than any of the rest, yet undertook willingly to sound him on the subject, and come up to the rectory to report progress. By this compliance he felt that he was ensuring for himself a good dinner that day, to say nothing of the chance of being noticed by the young squire and the rich merchant in a way that might be still more agreeable to his feelings.

During this conversation they had been walking through the park, following the ladies, whom Mr. Kenemall now proceeded to join, as soon as he had despatched his grey-headed assistant.

“ I have some hope of penetrating this mystery,” said he. “ You will not be much longer in suspense, I trust.”

“ I shall be *very* glad,” replied Mrs. Storer ; “ I confess that I feel extremely anxious. But look ! here comes my husband ! Oh ! he sees the clerk !”

The worthy merchant at this time was entering the gate of the park, and very shortly afterward met Timothy, from whom he took the keys of the church, saying he should walk there and examine the scene of action by himself quietly. After leaving the butcher’s, he had gone directly to the public-house to inquire if his coachman had discovered anything, and while talking to that self-sufficient person he saw Bernard advancing hastily towards them.

“ Have you seen the poor woman, Sir ?”

exclaimed the latter, still panting. "Is she better? Where does she live? I *must* see her!"

Mr. Storer beheld in the anxiety of the inquirer nothing more than the excess of humanity, and thinking that the feelings of his young friend were likely to be relieved thereby, answered—

"Oh! she'll do very well. Time—time. Only a foolish panic. Funeral over—all right."

"But where does she live?" again asked our hero; "I am *resolved* to see her!"

"Nonsense, nonsense," replied Mr. Storer; "do her more harm than good. You're not a doctor—only flurry her. I'll tell you what I've been doing. Go to work same way yourself. That's the only way! Find it out—all right then!"

He then gave an account of his own proceedings, and mentioned having promised a five-pound note to the butcher in case he should make the wished-for discovery. Peter the coachman was standing by during this commu-

nication, and having been admitted into confidence, thought himself quite at liberty to speak his sentiments.

“ You couldn’t ’a’ done better, Sir,” he said. “ Nothing like your flimsies to set ’em a-going. I ’ll vorrant as he ’ll soon be all over the wil-lage. A five-pounder’s summut to sich a von as ’im. It vos pretty near all up vith ’im t’other day, and I ’m blest if I don’t think he ’d ’a’ taken all the blame upon ’imself *then* for ’alf the money, vether he knowed anything about the consarn or not ?”

This insinuation was not lost upon Bernard Audrey.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE Mr. Storer was making his way to the church, Bernard was sitting in the neat little parlour of the village surgeon, apothecary, &c. The disciple of Galen happened not to be at home; and his rib could not think of making her appearance before the squire or baronet without first consulting her glass. The few minutes which passed while she was thus employed, seemed extremely long to our hero; for in his present state of mind he could take but small interest in the specimens of birds, bats, cockchafers, beetles, butterflies, snakes, and other vermin, which were stuffed, wired, pinned, caged, and bottled all around him.

Mrs. Semple at length showed herself, with a smile, a curtsy, and an apology for keeping

him waiting. She was what is commonly called, a nice little comfortable-looking body. It was a maxim with her, that keeping up a patient's spirits did more good than all the physic in her husband's shop. And, to say the truth, her cheerful, round, smiling face, and encouraging gossip, often sent the poor away with lighter hearts and better hopes than were usually caused by the longer visage and doubtful head-shake of her more profound spouse.

Bernard informed her that his extreme anxiety respecting old Martha was the cause of his visit, and inquired if she was acquainted with her husband's real opinion of the case.

"He thinks her very ill, I know," replied Mrs. Semple; "but I dare say she'll do very well after a little. It's all come upon her so suddenly, poor soul, that it's no wonder she's a little flustered at her time of life, as she's always kept up a good character, and so has all the family till now. But I don't believe a word about what they say of her son, not I."

"But is the poor woman really in imminent danger?" asked Bernard.

“ I know she ’s light-headed,” answered the little woman ; “ but we ’ve a great many light-headed patients that don’t die : and the doctor thinks, that when she comes to herself, and finds her son is buried and all quiet, if they tell her that all these foolish reports are nothing but nonsense, and have no ground at all,—why then he thinks she may soon get better. And so do I too, for I am very sure an uneasy mind ’s the cause of her illness, as it is of a pretty many others. There was George Burrows, the butcher, had the jaundice six months ago, come on all of a sudden, and a heartier young man in general you never saw. It was all because things were going wrong with him, and he took to fretting, and thinking about his wife and children—and my husband could do nothing for him ; and so he went about looking as miserable as possible, with his face as yellow as a sovereign, till Sir William or you, sir, I don’t know which, bought the estate—and then, when the workmen came down from London, and the labourers here were employed at good wages, and could all buy a bit of meat now and then,

he got better directly. Oh, Sir, you may depend upon it — make the mind easy, and the body will take care of itself. I've had my troubles, in my time, I promise you, and know what I'm talking about."

As it would be perfectly useless to visit the poor woman while she was "light-headed," Bernard turned his thoughts to a plan which had struck him, for the relief of her mind, without the necessity of exposing himself.

When Alicia had spoken so plainly and abruptly in the church-yard, he had hurried away, driven by the impulse of the moment, with the intention of seeking the bed-side of the invalid, and confessing himself to be the unseen cause of her distress. As he hastily advanced to the village, however, the too probable consequences of such a step presented themselves in formidable array, and told him of loss of honour, of the confidence of friends, and, too probably, of Alicia, whose evidence of superstitious weakness, on the present occasion, had been such as to leave small hopes that she would ever consent to be united to an invisible husband. But, the

dread of causing the death of a fellow creature was sufficient to make him cling to his previous resolution, being, moreover, buoyed up by the idea that he should be able, after relieving the patient's mind, to bribe her to secrecy. He was digesting this plan as he entered the village.

"That I may be safe," thought he, "I shall allow her an annuity, to be sent in quarterly payments, and entirely dependent on her silence. Her interest will then be my security—she will have no temptation to betray me."

This was all settled, in his own mind, when he saw Mr. Storer and Peter; and a hint, dropped by the latter, appeared to open to him another chance of escape from the perplexing consequences of his folly. So, matters being as they were, he told Mrs. Semple that he was of the same opinion as herself with respect to the influence of the mind over the body, and added,

"The butcher you alluded to is, I suppose then, now in very good circumstances?"

"Oh, bless you, no," replied the lady, "tradespeople can't get through their troubles quite so fast as that comes to. He's a pretty deal to do

yet before he'll be *even* with the world : but he's got plenty to do, for the present, and employment keeps him from thinking, and so from fretting ; and, if things go on as they do, he'll get all right by and by, and pay every body what he owes, like an honest man as he is. That's what I will say for George. He owes my husband a long bill, but we're not at all afraid ; and I'm very glad, sir, that you gave me an opportunity of telling you about him ; for, when you come to live at the Hall, you can't employ an honester or a more industrious man."

All this accorded delightfully with Bernard's plan ; so, taking leave of the good-tempered little woman, he repaired immediately to the butcher's, consoling himself as he went with the hope that, after all, his frolic would prove productive of good rather than evil. George had just sent off the old clerk, as he told his wife, " with a flea in his ear," because he had been " bothering " him again, as if he was a conjuror, and could account for what nobody else could. " And the squire of Maxdean Hall too was here but just now," he continued, " talking

about the same business. I can't think what the people have got in their heads. I know, I wish I could account for it, for poor Martha's sake. I wouldn't keep it a secret long, I know that."

"Here comes the young squire, I declare," cried his wife, as Bernard opened the wicket of the little front garden, and approached the house.

Vexed as George was, and felt he "had a right to be," he nevertheless knew his own interest too well to receive his landlord with any other than marks of the greatest respect.

Our hero was ushered into the snug, little back parlour, which Mr. Storer had so recently quitted, and, like him, he requested the butcher to be seated, and addressed him as follows: "My good fellow, I dare say you will feel surprised, and very probably be vexed, to hear that I am come upon the same errand which my worthy friend has been talking to you about this morning. The fact is, we are all, and I am *most particularly*, anxious respecting this poor woman, whose superstitious fears will too pro-

bably carry her to the grave, unless something is done, and that very speedily too, to relieve her mind. Now I am *firmly* convinced that the whole is a juggling, nonsensical trick — what you call a bit of fun, nothing more ; and there could not be any harm in it, *if* it were not for the poor woman's case. Mr. Storer tells me that you have denied any knowledge of the thing, and, therefore, I don't ask you any questions. For my own part, I shouldn't think any worse of a man for such a joke ; and to convince you of that, it was my intention, *merely* for the sake of the poor woman, to have taken the whole of the affair upon my own shoulders, and have declared that I had performed the part of the ghost ; but I found that it was impossible, because all the workpeople know that I was in my own room at the hall during the transaction ; so now I really don't know what is to be done."

" I wish I could help your honour, with all my heart," exclaimed the simple-minded butcher, " but I don't see how I can, because there's a matter of a score o' the workpeople

as 'll swear you was in the house, for, to tell you the truth, and I hope your honour won't be offended, we had some misgiving of that kind, because we knows as the quality folks like a rig now and then as well as we, particular Oxford and Cambridge scholars. I hope your honour won't be offended with my plain speaking."

"Not at all, not at all, George," replied Bernard; "on the contrary, I like you the better for it. It shows me I've got a man to deal with, and not one of your sneaking fellows that will say black is white, just as he thinks will please you at the moment. But about this poor woman, George, what can be done? We must not let her die of fright; I can't suffer that. I consider everybody in this village to be under my protection; for instance, I shall order my people not to buy a pound of meat anywhere but of you, unless I should see some very strong reason to suppose that you charge more than a fair profit, which, from what I hear, I have no reason to suppose you will do."

"Your honour may depend upon it," said the delighted butcher, "that you shall always

have the very best I can get, and at a fair living profit. I don't mean to say that I can sell meat at the same price it costs me, for if I did, I must cheat somebody, and that 's not my way. Nor I don't mean to say that your honour's servants mayn't now and then pick up a joint cheaper at the market-towns, when there's a bad sale, or a poor fellow wants money, or at the end of the day ; but this I will say, that no man shall supply your honour's table better than George Burrows—that is, to *live* ; and I'm not extravagant, and thank God, I can go to market better now, and look people in the face. And if I was ungrateful to your honour, it would be bad indeed ; for your coming to the hall has been the salvation of me and mine, and that 's certain sure."

" I'm glad to hear that it has been of use to you," observed our hero ; " but we are wandering from the subject of poor old Martha, whom, being an old and respectable inhabitant of the village, I consider to have the same claim on me as the rest. Now there 's only one way that I can think of for setting her mind at ease, and

I dare say you 'll think it a very odd way ; but I can't contrive any other, nor can I very well go about that without your assistance."

The butcher eagerly professed himself willing to do everything in his power, and rubbed his hands for joy, at the idea of being able to do anything to oblige his young landlord.

" The whole of the affair is this," continued Bernard, " we *must* get *somebody* to confess himself the deviser and actor of this trick. If we could find out the *real* person, and persuade him to do so, it would certainly be better, as I don't like to encourage anything like falsehood : but when life is at stake, I think myself justified in telling you, that I will make it well worth any one's while to take the blame of this nonsensical trick upon himself. Now, don't you know some active, shrewd young fellow, such another as yourself, who would just say that he took up some blood in a bottle or a bladder, and dropped it along, and make up a tale about the bell-rope—or shake his head knowingly, and *say* that he did it, but wouldn't tell how ? The *confession* is all I want, as *that* would save the

woman's life ; and I wouldn't mind giving fifty pounds out of my own pocket to obtain it."

"As for the matter of that," observed Burrows, "I'm sorry to say as we've two or three chaps here as would swear to any lie, and stick to it too, for half as many shillings : but then that wouldn't do no good, because nobody would believe 'em, particularly old Martha, who knows all the people in the village as well as I do my own children."

Bernard went on to repeat that something must be done, and *that* quickly, and that he himself would most certainly have taken the thing on his own shoulders, but for having unluckily attracted the attention of his workpeople. At length he ventured to hint his wish that the butcher should become the scapegoat.

The poor fellow started back at the proposal ; the colour mounted into his cheeks, and he felt as if he could have knocked any other man down who had dared so to insult him.

"Don't be angry, George," resumed Bernard, "after I have told you what I would myself do if I could, you cannot suppose I

mean to offend you, nor think you would be doing wrong. On the contrary, when Martha recovers, I shall envy you the reflection that you will have saved her life, and as nobody but myself will know how much it will cost you to make this sacrifice to your love of truth, you will make me your warm and steady friend hereafter. That you may see how much I am in earnest, I will make the fifty a hundred pounds—and,” he continued, taking out his pocket-book, and displaying its contents, “here are the notes, all ready for you, as soon as you shall have made up your mind. Well—I’ll give you an hour to think of it—don’t be hasty—think over what I have said coolly, and let me know the result at the rectory, where I shall dine to-day.”

He then rose to depart, and the butcher showed him out with great apparent respect, but mingled with a certain stiff air of offended pride, which raised him not a little in the opinion of his tempter.

Immediately he was left alone, the poor fellow set about his wonted occupations, and re-

solved to dismiss the conversation which had just passed, entirely from his mind. This, however, was no easy task — for, ever and anon, in the midst of his work, he caught himself making a rough calculation of the advantages he might derive from the possession of a hundred pounds, all in ready money. There was to be a sale, by auction, of a grazier's stock, about five miles off, in the course of the week. The steward had given him leave to turn as many sheep as he pleased into the park. Then he thought what a delightful thing it would be to surprise the three rich graziers, who were his principal creditors, and who had been so kind to him, by taking them ten or even twenty pounds each. But still he kept cutting and chopping away, muttering occasionally "Honesty's the best policy." "No good ever comes of lying."

In spite of these good resolutions, it occurred to him that he had rode by the lonely church, on his way home, almost immediately after the sexton had left it ; so that, *if* he chose to take the credit or blame of what had happen-

ed, no one would be enabled to prove an alibi, as in the case of Mr. Audrey.

In the midst of these cogitations, his aged parent, the publican, entered the shop, with a downcast, melancholy look.

“What’s the matter, father?” exclaimed George: “nothing particular, I hope?”

“Ay, but there is though!” groaned the old man, fumbling in his pockets, and at last pulling out and handing a letter to his son, “look at that! Confound ’em! I thought they would have waited a bit longer, now trade’s better. But, I know how it is—they want to get me out o’ the house—and out I must go, unless I can raise forty-one pounds, and I’m sure I don’t know where to look for a quarter of the money.”

George took the letter and read as follows.

“SIR,

“I am instructed by Messrs. Mashem and Co. to take legal measures for the recovery of the sum of forty-one pounds six shillings and six-

pence, being the amount of the balance of your account due to them up to last Midsummer; and if the said sum is not paid to me in three days from the date hereof, I shall proceed immediately, without further notice or delay. I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient servant,

“JABEZ SPRINGALL.”

“But haven’t you got any money at all by you, father?” inquired George.

“Only three one pound notes and a few shillings,” replied the old man, with a sigh.

“I wish I’d known this before I paid my rent t’other day,” said George; “the steward would have waited longer for that, only I wished to get all right before Sir William comes back, because I’m in hopes of getting a lease and a bit of land.”

“Lord knows what ’s to become of me in my old age,” groaned the father. “All the rest of my creditors will be upon me directly they know of this, and the London folks have been writing to me to pay for the half pipe of wine that their traveller made me give him an order

for, after making me more than half drunk, though I remember as well as if it was this moment, that he said I needn't be in any hurry about paying for it, and I shouldn't have ordered it at all else, and did so only because the surveyor and his clerks wanted a bottle now and then. They'll all be upon me now, and there'll be a scramble for what they can get, and I shall be turned out of house and home. I wish I'd died when your poor mother did, George !”

“ Don't talk so, father !” said the son ; “ if the worst comes to the worst, you can come and live with us anyhow. But I hope — I have some hopes of, perhaps, doing something for you. The young squire, that is to be the baronet, was here just now — and — I think — perhaps — but I don't know what to say about it. It goes sadly against the grain.”

“ Ay, ay ! I know what you mean,” said the old man. ‘ He who goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing,’ I know that pretty well, to my cost. But they do say that he and the squire from London too, are very good sort of people,

and if I could but get through this business, and pay off the brewers, Maydwell the maltster would be very glad to serve me, and I would brew my own beer again, as we used to do when your poor mother was alive; and that makes a precious difference, as I've good cause to know since the brewers have had me under their thumb."

"Well, father," said George, "you'd better go home, and not say anything to anybody about it, and I'll see what can be done, and step up to you in the course of the afternoon. Keep up your spirits."

"Hard work that, George," observed the old man. "But there — there — I will try — God bless you, my good lad! I know you'll do all you can for me. But don't go to hurt yourself along of my concerns. Mustn't forget Sally and the children. I *must* just have a look at little Georgy before I go. Bless his heart! He little thinks what a world of trouble he's come into. Heigho!"

When the aged grandfather had got the child upon his knee, he hung over it with more

than usual fondness. The little prattler seemed struck with the change in his manner, and, after looking up in his face attentively, exclaimed, “ Ganpa — oo’ve been crying ! Some naughty man hurt Ganpa. Tell Georgy what ’s matter — Georgy got sword now — won’t let nobody hurt Ganpa.” And then he threw his little arms round the neck of the grey-headed old man, who clasped the innocent to his bosom, and hanging over him, was no longer able to restrain the gathering tears against which he had manfully struggled.

The poor butcher was witness to this little scene, and for a moment he gazed in silence — then bit his lip ; took up his chopper — affected to make use of it — threw it down again — repeated the action twice, and at last seized his hat, threw it on his head, and hurried out of the shop.

The rector had determined to be as punctual as Mr. Storer in the hour of dinner, and it wanted only five minutes to five when Bernard’s valet entered the drawing-room, and whispered something in his master’s ear, which caused the

latter to leave the room immediately, with a light step and a cheerful air. The butcher was waiting for him in a small parlour.

“ Well, George,” said our hero, “ I thought you were a man of too much sense not to come to a proper conclusion ?”

“ As to that, your honour,” replied Burrows, “ I’ll tell you plainly, that if I didn’t want the money I wouldn’t have anything to do with it—and—even now I’ve a great mind not.”

“ Phoo, phoo !” exclaimed Bernard ; “ consider, there ’s a life at stake. It ’s a good deed ; a humane act ; depend upon it you ’ll never repent of making a little sacrifice of your own scruples to ensure the happiness of others ?”

“ I hope not,” observed George, “ for I call your honour to witness that it is only on account of others —”

“ There are the notes,” said Bernard, throwing them upon the table. “ Put them in your pocket. All you have to do is to put your name to this paper, which I got ready because I knew you would come. Here, Andrews !” he

continued, opening the door and calling his valet, who waited outside by his orders.

“ They have just put the dinner on table, sir,” said the man, entering.

“ Write your name there !” exclaimed our hero in a hurried manner. George hesitated a moment. “ Just here,” said our hero, putting his finger on the paper, and not venturing to meet the eye of his victim. George trembled as he wrote, and then heaved a sigh.

“ That ’s right, my fine fellow,” said Bernard, drawing the paper towards him and signing it with his own name as a witness. “ They are all waiting for me to begin dinner, so I can’t say any more to you now, but I ’ll give you a call next time I come over, and recollect, I shall want a whole ox for the workpeople at Christmas.”

With these words he left the room in high spirits, and the poor butcher returned to his home, he hardly knew how.

CHAPTER IX.

BERNARD obtained great credit for his perseverance and the discovery of a mystery, the fame of which had already spread far and wide throughout the country. Mr. Kenemall, at the request of all, wrote a note, at the dinner-table, desiring Mr. Semple, the surgeon and apothecary, to carry the good news to poor Martha ; and, in due course, a reply came to say that the intelligence seemed to have produced the most favourable effect.

Our hero was in high spirits that evening, and in his way home, congratulated himself upon the possession of his invisible gift. “ To be sure,” thought he, “ it has given me some trouble in this last affair, but then I should not otherwise have known anything of the character

of honest Burrows, nor have had it in my power to serve him so effectually. And poor Martha too: I'll see what can be done for her and her grandchildren. Really this frolic, after all, has made me what a country squire ought to be. It has brought me into contact with the people whom I ought to know, and made us intimate with the clergyman, who really appears to be a very friendly, hospitable, decent sort of fellow. Couldn't have known him otherwise, for we were all prejudiced against him, and thought him little better than a buckram toadeater. Free and easy as an old glove, now we're acquainted. And poor old 'Timothy too, the psalm-singing old sinner! I've pretty nearly frightened him out of his wits, so I must contrive some way of making him amends."

In spite, however, of this determination to view everything in the most favourable light, he could not avoid reflecting on his pillow at night, with some uneasiness, upon the multitude of falsehoods into which he had been entrapped. Counting them was *now* quite out of the question; they were numberless. Then he was not

only become an habitual liar himself, but had bribed another to sign an untruth. Yet, unsatisfactory as all this was, he managed to justify himself to himself, by quoting the purity of his motives; and so it happened that, though his dreams were of an odd kind, his slumbers were, upon the whole, quiet and refreshing.

“What d’ye mean to do with yourselves to-day?” asked Mr. Storer, the next morning at breakfast. “Think I shall drive over to Audrey. Got something in my head—never mind—tell you when I come back—meet at dinner, eh?”

His good lady said she had certain domestic duties to attend to, and should not stir out, and the young people resolved to have a day of rest and quietness at home.

After the worthy merchant had taken his departure, Bernard chatted over their plans with Alicia, walked with her in the pleasure-ground, sate by her side, or leaned over, as she played and sang him certain of his favourite airs, and was altogether as happy as favoured lovers usually are on such occasions.”

“ Did you ever hear Emily sing ?” asked Alicia.

“ No,” replied Bernard ; “ I was not aware she could. She has always declined when asked.”

“ That is from modesty, or bashfulness, or whatever you please to call it,” said Alicia. “ I assure you that it is one of the greatest treats you can have, if ever you should be able to hear her, when she thinks she is quite secure of not being heard. Even though we are such old friends, she is quite nervous before me. Her voice is not strong, but it is so clear and sweet you can have no idea.”

Nothing more was said on the subject, and shortly afterwards Alicia retired to her room for the purpose, as she said, of writing a *long* letter, and Bernard went to the stables, to look at and give some orders respecting his horses. As he returned to the house, his unlucky ears unluckily caught the sounds of music. “ Ah,” thought he, “ that must be Emily, for Alicia is writing,” and he advanced along the hall as quickly as possible.

The room in which the young lady was sitting, could not be entered without passing through another, at the door of which he stood awhile and listened ; but the distance was too great to allow of his hearing more than faint, yet apparently exquisite modulations.

“ I have a great mind,” thought Bernard, “ to enter unseen. Why should I not ? No harm can possibly arrive from gratifying such an innocent curiosity.” Yet still he hesitated, from the recollection of how much trouble he had been subjected to by frolics apparently as harmless.

At that moment the harmonious tones suddenly ceased, and then he distinctly heard the approach of light footsteps from the inner room. The idea of being caught listening decided the question, for the hall in which he stood was too large to admit of escape. So he pulled his left ear, and stepped aside, at the moment Emily opened the door, and looked suspiciously round.

“ I thought I heard some one,” she whispered, advancing a few paces, and thereby affording Bernard an opportunity, of which he availed

himself, to slip into the room she had just quit-
ted. When she had perfectly satisfied herself
that the coast was quite clear, she returned to
her amusement, and thus afforded great de-
light to her invisible auditor.

The old Adam and Eveish feeling, which is
ever urging poor mortals to set an undue value
on forbidden or stolen pleasures, might, on that
occasion, have been exercising its influence
over Bernard. He thought he had never heard
any singing so naturally touching, simple, and
perfect in its kind. The fair warbler seldom
finished any one thing, but ran from piece to
piece, and from song to song, sometimes accom-
panying herself on the piano, and sometimes
with the harp. Now and then she would, in
the fulness of good spirits, catechise herself
playfully.

“No, Miss Emily,” she said, that won’t do.
I’m sure you *can* sing better than that, if you
will *but* try. Open your mouth, you silly
creature, there’s nobody to hear you.”

She then went on with her practice ; and as
she confined herself generally to simple melo-

dies and ballads, precisely suited to her style and voice, even a connoisseur might have felt pleasure in listening to her. Bernard, however, was far more of an amateur than a connoisseur. He became perfectly enraptured, and had once or twice nearly forgotten his present character so far as to express his approbation aloud.

“I’ll try that ‘Just like love’ of Davy’s,” she exclaimed, “they say it’s a little out of my way—but never mind. Where can it be?” I know it’s in one of these books;” and she began searching where Bernard knew her search would be fruitless; but it was impossible for him to direct her. So he stood an unseen and impatient witness of what passed, till she gave up the pursuit, and selecting another piece, left the piano, and sat down to the harp.

But the song she had named was one of our hero’s particular favourites, and the book in which it was bound, lay close by him. Therefore he took an opportunity, while Emily’s attention was otherwise engaged, of slyly turn-

ing the leaves and leaving the folio open at the desired page. When the unsuspecting performer, therefore, retired from her harp, she was greatly astonished.

“Why, what could I be thinking about?” she exclaimed. “It is the most extraordinary thing I ever saw in my life. I declare I don’t believe I looked in this book at all. And yet, that’s nonsense—because, if I hadn’t, how could it have come here? Well—I’ll try what I can make of the song, however,” and saying these words, she sat down to the piano. She acquitted herself in a style that perfectly astonished her invisible hearer; and then rose and went again to the harp.

“She is quite in the humour for singing,” said Bernard to himself, “and in most excellent voice. There are some more of my favourites in that book: and as I can’t ask her, I’ll just turn to one presently, for I’m sure she doesn’t know where she left it open.”

Emily was sitting at the harp with her back towards him, as before; but the book now, instead of lying flat upon the piano, stood

upright against the frame, as when she had been singing, and it so happened that she saw it reflected in a glass opposite to her. Great was her astonishment to perceive the leaves in motion, and turning backward and forward, as though possessed of life. All music and singing were of course instantly at an end, and she felt herself trembling as she gazed at the phenomenon.

Bernard, who could neither see her face, nor imagine that he was the cause of her silence, proceeded in his task as cautiously and noiselessly as possible. When Emily turned round, he let fall the leaf which he had in his hand, and clearly read the consequences of his rashness in the paleness and expression of her countenance. The poor girl stared wildly, lifted her hand to her forehead, gasped a sort of shuddering exclamation, and then instead of fainting, rushed out of the room. Bernard followed, and saw her flying up the staircase as if she had wings. It then became necessary for him to decide what he should do with his invisible self.

“ I cannot make my appearance here directly,” said he, “ I must first be seen coming from some distance towards the house. Poor Emily ! I am sorry that I frightened her. But she will soon get the better of it. We must laugh her out of it, and persuade her it was all fancy. She is not so nervous as some young ladies, or she certainly would have fainted, and then I don’t know what I should have done.”

Endeavouring thus to persuade himself that no unpleasant consequences would result from his folly, he made his way into a sheltered part of the grounds, for the purpose of choosing a retired spot in which he might pull his right ear in security.

In the mean while, the terrified Emily had rushed into the boudoir of her dear friend Alicia, and told her strange tale as well as she was able. Alicia could not forbear smiling, and begged her to consider the impossibility of the thing.

“ My dear girl,” said she, “ it must have been entirely fancy, or, perhaps, it might be the wind ; or, indeed, you know very well that

books will not remain open in one place. But I see you are really frightened—smell this bottle, my love, you 'll soon be better.”

Emily soon recovered sufficiently to give a more detailed account, in which she adhered to her former assertion that the leaves of the books positively and deliberately turned themselves backward and forward, and added the extraordinary circumstance of its having opened itself at “Just like love.”

“I am *now* quite sure,” she said, “that I did not previously even touch that book, though I hunted for the song in vain, in several others.”

“Well, my dearest Emily,” observed her incredulous friend, “all I can say is, that it is a most wonderful book, and a very polite book too, to open itself just where you wished. But, come, come, let us go and look at it. You will find it all right now, I have no doubt. You sang a little too long, and exerted yourself too much; and then a sort of dizziness is very apt to come over one. I have experienced the same thing myself very frequently.”

Emily was not to be persuaded against the evidence of her senses; and when they visited the music-room, the quietude of the book afforded her no proof of her delusion. But she felt that it was impossible to be offended with Alicia, for not crediting so extraordinary a circumstance; and, after a little reflection, resolved to appear as though she herself attributed the whole to some optical delusion.

“It is much better to seem so convinced,” thought the kind-hearted girl, “for if Alicia believed what I saw, it would only make her unhappy and terrified as I am. Oh! I dare not think of it. Perhaps it is a warning to me of some dreadful calamity. I have heard of such things—of opening of doors, and so on, but never believed them as I ought, perhaps. What *can* this mean?” And the poor girl spent the remainder of the morning in her own room, trembling and unhappy.

When Bernard entered the drawing-room before dinner, he found no one but Alicia, who requested him not to notice anything particular that he might observe in her friend’s manner

or conduct, and added, "She has been a little nervous and fanciful this morning. I attribute it to having allowed her mind to dwell too long on that frightful butcher's ridiculous bell-pulling trick. I declare I quite hate to think of the fellow. Hist!—Here she comes."

Emily entered and crouched down by the fire, held out her hands, and shivering, exclaimed, "It's very cold!"

The real state of the weather at that time, rendered it but too probable that her words and posture were intended merely for the purpose of concealing her feelings.

"Here's papa!" exclaimed Alicia, going to the window: "He is always so exact. Just the same as when we were in town, or at Clapham. I often used to wonder how he could manage it, when he had so much to do—but he says it's the easiest thing in the world, when a system is once established. See—he is looking at his watch, and comparing it with the turret clock. He has just time to step upstairs before dinner—so he won't come here till the moment the hour strikes."

The members of Mr. Storer's family observed, during dinner, that he was occasionally absent ; but they avoided making any allusion to the circumstance, under the idea that his mind was occupied with the contents of some mercantile letters, which had arrived in the morning. Bernard was the only one of the party who affected to be in good spirits. He had inquired after old Martha, and Mr. Storer replied, "She is out of all danger, now," and then relapsed into a silence, which he seemed inclined to break as little as possible.

"All's right then," thought our hero; "nothing now remains but to laugh poor Emily out of what she saw ; and that will be soon done, for, though she is very amiable and all that, she is but a silly girl after all."

After dinner, when the ladies had withdrawn, Mr. Storer said, "Humph ! Alone now. Suppose you saw I was a little out of sorts—bad news—told you the old woman was out of danger—true enough that—not pleased with myself though, for speaking so—bad—too much like a lie. Fact is, she's dead."

“Dead!” exclaimed Bernard Audrey, “Dead! Good heavens! Then I——”

Mr. Storer gazed upon the young man’s pale and horror-stricken countenance with astonishment.

“Why, Bernard,” he cried, “what’s the matter with you, man? Would think the old woman was your mother. Never saw her, did you?”

“No — never, never,” murmured our hero, “but I have been led into this by an artful, designing——. How could I have suspected ——?”

“Ay, ay!” observed Mr. Storer, “How, indeed? Rascal looks as innocent as one of the sheep he kills. Diddled you out of your money, though. Know a proverb would come in pat — shan’t quote it now. Look sharper another time. Not used to deal with rogues as I am. Offered him five pounds, myself — wouldn’t bite — stood out — told lies, thick as hops — murdered the woman, sir. Knew she was dying — stood out — cool, deliberate murder. Make nothing else of it, talk for a month.”

As soon as he had recovered himself sufficiently from the first shock, Bernard, catching, as drowning men will, at straws, inquired if Mr. Storer was certain of the poor woman's death; "for you know, sir," he continued, "the doctor said that the news we sent her last evening, had a favourable effect?"

"Ay, ay," was the reply, "too favourable a pretty deal. Gave her a turn—all joy—too much of it—didn't last long—got light-headed—thought she saw ghosts, and all that. Relapse worse than all. Gone now, sure enough. Annuity gone with her—five children—go to the parish. Curse the butcher!—God forgive me! Can't help it. Rascal—no more meat at his shop, mind. Won't catch me at table if you do—promise you that. Pack him off! Good thing he didn't get a lease first, eh? Precious scoundrel! I called on him—gave it him properly, I promise you. Didn't know what to say for himself at first—soon came round though—bold as brass—talked of his conscience—precious conscience, eh? Said he couldn't blame himself—knew you wouldn't

neither. Thinks you're an idiot then — let him know better. Hardened rascal — cheat a lawyer! — carries it off well — come to the gallows some day, though."

Bernard got away from table as soon as possible; and when he found himself alone, the sudden change which his prospects had undergone, was almost more than he could endure. It was of little avail that he argued the purity of his motives in the transaction of the preceding day, or recurred to the childish innocence of his previous frolic.

The existing state of things pressed upon him with intolerable weight. By whatever foolish whims or philanthropic intentions he might have been guided in either case, the facts were, that he had caused the death of a poor woman, had reduced five helpless innocents to a state of absolute poverty, and deprived an honest tradesman of that character, on which he chiefly depended for the support of himself and family. Once or twice he regretted that he had not made known the possession of his invisible gift, in the first instance,

either to Mr. Storer or Alicia ; but such a step *now* was quite out of the question, as it could not bring the poor woman to life, while it would be tantamount with a confession that he was her murderer. All that he could do now, was to skreen poor George Burrows as much as possible from the consequences of having complied with his request ; and likewise to take the five helpless orphans under his own charge. These duties he resolved to perform, and received some solace from the resolution.

It may easily be imagined, that that was a dull gloomy evening with the little family at Maxdean. Mr. Storer had told the bad news to the ladies at the time our hero was occupied with his own solitary reflections ; and when the latter joined the tea-table, a mournful silence prevailed for some time, and was first broken by the worthy merchant.

“ Well, well,” said he, “ the poor woman’s gone—better off, no doubt. Couldn’t have lived long anyhow. No use fretting, Bernard, —did all you could—more than you ought,

perhaps — never mind — well meant — heart's all. Bit more sugar, Ally. Must get rid of the butcher, though."

"Surely," observed Mrs. Storer, who was seldom in the habit of giving her opinion at all, and when she did, usually in the kindest and most charitable manner, finding excuses or palliations for conduct which others strongly reprobated — "Surely," she observed, "that man never can know peace of mind again! He may call it a frolic, or what he will; but when he knew the poor creature was dying, to keep back the truth till he got his price, was quite horrid."

"If it had been merely told me," said Alicia, "if I had not known it—if we had not all known it, I could not have believed that any human being had so black a heart. How he could hesitate a single moment is wonderful — is it not, Bernard?"

"Oh—yes—certainly," stammered her lover; "it is all perplexing; but the human mind is often acted upon in a way difficult to be explained. It is not always safe to judge by ap-

pearances. There may, perhaps—be found—” here he hesitated. The fact was, that he felt himself obliged to say something, and wishing, if possible, to check the torrent against his innocent victim, whose innocence he dared not openly declare, he had bewildered himself, and did not well know what he was talking about.

“Not judge by appearances!” exclaimed Mr. Storer; “judge by actions though. Fellow’s a liar—barefaced, hardened liar—all know that. Liar’ll do anything. Once begin lying—all up. Wrong at bottom—principle gone then. Right to suspect anything. Cheat—steal—murder—nothing stop ’em but the gallows. Catch *him* some day—take my word. No matter how soon. Must give him warning to-morrow morning, though. Make an example—that’s the only way.”

“I declare I’ll never taste any thing that comes out of his shop!” exclaimed Alicia.

“Nor I,” said her father. “I’d rather make my dinner on bread and cheese.”

“And so had I,” added Mrs. Storer.

“Humph!” thought our hero. “Here’s a

stumbling-block in the outset. How am I to make the poor fellow amends then? I am determined to manage that somehow, at all events." He then pondered on various schemes for effecting his benevolent purpose; but the only decision at which he could arrive was, that he would ride over on the morrow, and see what could be done.

The arrival of the post, however, the next morning, made a temporary change in the state of things. There was a letter from Sir William Audrey, requesting Mr. Storer to meet him in London, for the purpose of arranging the pecuniary concerns of the young people previous to the marriage. Some instructions to Bernard relative to the estate, rendered his presence necessary in the country for a few days longer. But as Mrs. Storer and her daughter had a variety of purchases to make, which could not be made so well elsewhere, she resolved upon their accompanying her husband to town. And thus the little family circle at Maxdean Hall was broken up, as they said, for about a week or ten days, at *farthest*.

CHAPTER X.

THE Storer family-travelling-carriage was, in due time, regularly equipped, and stored with its various seat-boxes, drop-boxes, sliding trunks, imperials, and hat and bonnet-cases, &c. &c. and then made its formidable appearance, slowly grinding the travelling sweep before Maxdean Hall.

Bernard took an affectionate leave of Alicia, handed her into the carriage, squeezed her hand, and so forth; and enacted the amiable towards his intended parents in law, and poor Emily, who was far from being sorry to quit a place where she had been so strangely terrified.

“Run up if you can,” said Mr. Storer. “Dine at five—same as here—no difference. Only generally have a friend or so in Russell

Square—all in the family way—plain sort of folks—no ceremony—find you a bed, dare say. If not, single man always manage that in town, eh ?”

The carriage drove off as he was speaking, and had already advanced about twenty yards, when he suddenly thrust his head out of the window, and exclaimed, “ I say—mind don’t forget to oust the butcher,” and then, as the distance increased, he seemed to be repeating some of his anathemas of the preceding evening.

Whatever our hero might have felt as a lover, when parting from Alicia, he soon became entirely engrossed by the cares and duties which had so strangely devolved upon him, in consequence of the foolish use to which he had applied his invisible powers. “ If I can but get out of this scrape tolerably,” said he, “ I will take especial care never to exercise them again, except in cases of importance. In the mean while I must be content to sacrifice money, which, as matters are, and with my present prospects, is, after all, of no great importance to me.”

On his arrival at Audrey Hall, he took possession of the solitary room, left untouched by the workmen for his accommodation; and then despatched a messenger to require the attendance of George Burrows.

When the poor fellow came, Bernard was struck by his gloomy, discontented, and down-cast look. "Sit down, George," said he. "You don't seem in spirits to-day."

"No, I a'n't," replied the butcher, twisting his hat in all directions as he held it between his knees. "I haven't been my own man since that business. I suppose your honour's heard as how it was all of no use, and poor Martha's dead? And now all the neighbours say as her death lays at my door, and I'm sure I don't know what the consequence'll be. I hope your honour'll give me back the paper now, and I'll bind myself down as tight as you like, to give back all the rest of the money—there's sixty pounds!" (Here he took the sum mentioned from a canvass-bag, and laid it on the table.) There's six of the notes, just as you gave 'em to me. I wish I hadn't been obliged to

use the other four; but — I *couldn't* help it, and that's the truth."

"But, my good fellow," said Bernard, affecting much seriousness and importance, "you don't mean to say that you really had nothing to do with the hoax?"

"Yes, but I do," replied Burrows. "The money you offered me, and the chance of saving poor Martha, and another reason besides, tempted me to put my name to a lie, for the first time in my life; and I'll take pretty good care it shall be the last, for I've had no peace ever since."

"Then pray who *can* have played the trick?" asked our hero. "Have you no suspicion of any one?"

"Why, look ye, your honour," said George, "I won't conceal *no* part of my mind from *you*; and that's what hangs most upon me, and makes me feel as if I was under a judgment, seeing as I've been wicked enough to say as I did that what no mortal man could have done anyhow, but nothing else than a downright supernatural substance, which I don't believe was neither more nor less than the spirit of

poor Laurence Higgs, come out of his grave for some mysterus purpose. If there 'd been ever a mortal soul about, he couldn't have escaped us, for I was close to your gamekeeper when he let fly both barrels at once, and the ghost, or whatever it was, let go the bell-rope. Well, it's no use going over the same story over and over again. All I've got to say now is, that I hope your honour'll give me back the paper, and stand by me when I tell the truth, or else I'm a ruined man, and very soon sha'n't have a friend in the world. The parson's been at me this morning, and yesterday Squire Storer blackguarded me like a pickpocket, and I couldn't say a word for myself, because I knew there was my own hand-writing against me."

"Then you mean to say that the money which I offered you was too great a temptation?" inquired our hero.

"I think I said so at the time," replied George; "at least I knew I meant it; and you wouldn't wonder at it if you knew what I wanted it for."

"I suppose then that is a secret," observed

Bernard, wishing to find some pretext for keeping the poor fellow to his bargain.

“ No, your honour, not to *you*,” replied the butcher ; “ *you* promised to befriend me, and it’s nothing I need be ashamed of, only, for the sake of my poor father, I shouldn’t like as *every* body should know it.” He then related the particulars of the interview, which have been given in a preceding page, between himself and his aged parent.

“ There’s your paper, George !” exclaimed our hero, giving way to his better feelings and tossing it across the table. The poor fellow seized it as a kite seizes his prey, glanced at his own name, saw all was right, and then tore it into a hundred pieces.

“ Well, George,” said our hero, “ your mind will be easy now, I hope. But as for the money, I shall *not* take that back. You have performed that for which I agreed to give it, and a bargain’s a bargain, you know, whether it turns out well or ill.”

For some time Burrows demurred, but at length acknowledged that the bills certainly would be of great use to him, and then agreed

to keep them, with the understanding that the whole should be considered as a debt, to be claimed whenever the squire might think fit.

“So far, so good,” said Bernard Audrey as soon as he was alone. “I’ve got that poor fellow out of his difficulties. He has no reason now to regret the temptation I led him into. And his poor old father too has been saved from ruin by my means. Really this foolish business will end well after all, and puts me in the way of doing a great deal of good. My motive for bribing the butcher will perfectly exonerate me, and now, when it is known that he had nothing to do with the affair, his character will stand as fair as ever, and he has got money in his pocket to go to market with. I will now go and consult the rector about what I had better do with the five poor children.”

The reverend gentleman welcomed his unexpected visitor with the utmost respect and cordiality, and insisted upon his taking up his abode, for the short time he talked of remaining in the country, in the quietude of the rectory, instead of living amid the confusion of workmen at the hall.

When these important preliminaries were arranged, Bernard related the occurrences of the morning, and Mr. Kenemall, whose eye was keenly habituated to discern the good qualities of the "nobility and gentry," paid many compliments to his guest on the score of humanity, generosity, &c.

"But, my dear Sir," he continued, "surely you paid rather too high a price for so trifling a service?"

"Oh, not at all!" replied our hero. "You will observe that the necessity for bidding so high ere the butcher could be stirred from his blunt integrity tells greatly in his favour."

"Most assuredly, Sir," observed the rector; "that did not strike me before. I now see the matter precisely in the same light."

"I really have a very high opinion of the poor fellow," said Bernard, speaking with the warmth which men are wont to feel when they have first resolved to take any one under their protection.

"And so have I always had," added Mr. Kenemall, "though I confess that his apparent

cruelty toward the poor woman in this affair did produce a temporary unfavourable impression on my mind ; but *now* all is cleared up, and I shall make it a point to take the first opportunity of letting him know that I am glad to find myself undeceived."

It would be both tedious and unnecessary to repeat all that passed between the young squire and the rector, and the rector's wife, who was admitted to the consultation respecting the five poor children. The result of all was an unanimous decision that they could not be better placed than under the care of George Burrows, or, more correctly speaking, under that of his wife. For Sally was generally considered to be an active, tidy, pains-taking young woman, who would be sure to bring them up in habits of industry. When, however, the proposition was made in due form, neither she nor her husband seemed to like the idea of so great and sudden an increase in their family ; but the terms offered by the young squire, were such as at length to overcome every objection ; so, before he left the country, he had the satisfaction of seeing

the orphans removed to a comfortable home, where they might be said to be better off than if their grandmother had survived, since, at her age, it was unlikely that she could have continued with them many years, even under the most favourable circumstances. It therefore appeared very fortunate for them that her death had been hastened by a catastrophe which attracted the attention, and consequently awakened the sympathy of more powerful friends than they could expect ever to have found if events had taken their usual course.

These considerations, and the reflection upon what he had been able to do for honest Burrows, occupied our hero's mind during his journey to London, where he found Sir William anxiously expecting him. The old knight was snugly boxed in his favourite room at the Imperial Hotel, in Covent Garden, a situation which he preferred to the more showy establishments farther west, because, as he said, it was "in the centre of every thing." The coal fire was blazing away with the warmth and cheerfulness of Christmas, and a lawyer had just retired as our

hero made his appearance, and was cordially welcomed by his uncle.

“ All goes on well, Bernard,” he said ; “ you certainly are the most fortunate fellow I ever knew. Old Storer — no, ahem ! I shouldn’t call him *old* neither, when I recollect my own age. No matter, however, for that — he has come forward in the most handsome manner. How much now, should you imagine, he is willing and ready to give his daughter on the marriage day ? Perhaps you know though ? ”

“ No, really Sir,” replied Bernard, “ I have not the most distant idea. You know that my attachment to Alicia was utterly independent of all such calculations.”

“ Certainly,” observed Sir William ; “ disinterested and romantic enough, in all conscience, for any hero of romance. But you must be aware that there are *some trifling* advantages and comforts to be derived from the possession of a given number of thousands. You would not, at all events, quarrel with your mistress’s picture because it was set in gold ? So — what say you to twenty thousand pounds ? ”

Bernard expressed his approbation and content in a manner by no means satisfactory to Sir William, who would have been better pleased to find his nephew somewhat more given to calculation.

“Pish!” said the knight, “contented! I could find it in my heart to be angry with you, Bernard. Consider, sir, your father-in-law that is to be, has been at the head of a great East India firm for these thirty years. What is twenty thousand pounds for such a man to give with his only child?”

“I am quite unacquainted with the nature of such concerns as you allude to,” replied the nephew, with some slight apprehension that his uncle had been driving a hard bargain with Mr. Storer, and that he himself might be suspected of mercenary thoughts.

“No doubt, no doubt,” observed Sir William; “but you’ll know more about them by and by. Well — I will not keep you longer in suspense. Storer is to give you a check on the wedding-day for twenty thousand, and thirty more are to be settled by him on Alicia, for the

eventual benefit of your children. That will make fifty thousand — and allow me to tell you that at his death, you may calculate upon double that sum, in addition, at *least*. Then—there is your own fortune—and you will have the Audrey estate—and I shall contrive to get a trifle together against the wedding—and so, altogether, I think you'll be able to keep up the dignity of a baronet tolerably well, to say nothing of the sticks and odd papers that I must leave behind me some day."

It is not to be supposed that our hero was insensible to the various advantages with which he was about to enter into life, with the chosen object of his affections. After expressing his gratitude to his uncle, and promising to breakfast with him next morning, he repaired to Russell Square in high spirits. As he had written a few hasty lines to her on the preceding evening, he was not surprised, though highly gratified, at finding Alicia alone. The rest of the family were gone to Covent Garden Theatre, to see Liston in one of his favourite characters. Genuine English comedy was the

only public amusement that had power to attract the unsophisticated merchant from his own fireside. 'The more elaborate and highly paid performances at the Italian opera, he most inelegantly and characteristically called "humbug," and declared that they were only patronized by people who did not know what they wanted.

On the present occasion he had neither expressed surprise nor uneasiness at his daughter's unusual wish to be left alone, even though she pleaded indisposition, for his quick eye had caught a glimpse of Bernard's handwriting. A similar cause prevented Emily from insisting upon staying to keep her friend company : and so the lovers had the whole house to themselves without the least fear of interruption. This was most delightful, as they had much to say of many things ; and fortunately there arose no difference of opinion upon any.

The drawing-room in which this never-to-be-forgotten evening was passed, contained a more than usual portion of those incumbrances which fashion orders to be admitted under the name

of furniture. There were Chinese china mandarins, that, like courtly sycophants on our side of the globe, always began bowing and smirking whenever they were rudely struck or kicked. A six-foot pagoda occupied one corner, and the model of an eastern dwelling, with its bamboo, net-like outworks, filled a corresponding recess. On the two mantelpieces, pier-slabs, tables, and “what nots,” were scattered and grouped—little fat, squat, ugly, face-making, rice Josses, Bonzes, and nondescript monsters—and beneath and in the windows stood huge porcelain jars. Then there were cabinets inlaid with gold and pearl, and furnished with labyrinths of recesses and secret drawers, in which little else was to be seen save the ingenuity of the workman. The remainder, or more useful part of the furniture of the room, need not be described farther than by stating, that it was such as may be seen every day in the dwellings of the wealthy, or of those who would fain make the world believe them to be the peculiar favourites of fortune and fashion.

In this museum-like drawing-room Bernard

and Alicia sate, and lounged, and walked, and talked, and laughed, and whispered, and so forth, till the watchman (for these things happened in the days of the charlies) bawled " Past eleven o'clock !"

Now when two lovers are left together, to do and say just as they please, without fear of peepers or eaves'-droppers, it is not to be expected that they shall sit upright, twirling their thumbs, upon chairs placed at the extreme corners of the room. Neither, if they are at all well-bred, is it to be supposed that they can find no other amusement than smacking their lips, as if they were practising with coachwhips. The reader will please to have the goodness to imagine that Bernard and Miss Storer had pursued a middle course, during their happy *tête-à-tête*, up to the moment when they sate in a manner which it is absolutely necessary for us to describe.

Without presuming for an instant to defend the lover against any charge of boisterous rudeness which may be brought forward, or attempting to justify the young lady, for even a mo-

mentary submission to such a Darby and Joan style of courtship, we simply state the fact as follows. When the aforesaid nocturnal guardian was bellowing his unintelligible announcement of the hour, Alicia was absolutely sitting on the right knee of our hero ! It may be supposed that she had not often occupied such a position, as, in order to save herself from falling, her left arm passed round his neck, and thus afforded the same degree of security as an unskilful rider finds in grasping the pommel of the saddle. It is not to be imagined that the seat was of her own choosing. Bernard had thrown himself upon the sofa, and pulled her towards him. The fear which she expressed of getting her hair still more out of order was, perhaps, the cause why she did not struggle violently : but still there was a show of resistance ; and even after she was seated, she made one or two ineffectual attempts to rise. Bernard threatened her playfully if she would not sit still, but whatever his threats were, they seem not to have been sufficiently alarming to produce the desired effect, for, instead of sub-

mitting quietly to her fate, she forthwith commenced a series of fresh struggles, the termination of which was of a most appalling nature. Once or twice she appeared nearly to have accomplished her release, and then anon it was evident that he was the stronger. At length, scarcely knowing what she did, and her left arm being in the position before-mentioned, her hand came in contact with his ear. She pulled it, and instantly her lover disappeared !

The poor girl opened her eyes as wide as possible—still felt that her seat was firm under her, and that her arm was as before. A sickly feeling came over her ; it seemed as though she had been struck with sudden blindness. Then she pressed her hands to her eyes and forehead, as if to ascertain whether she was not dreaming or in a swoon. The dress of his mistress prevented Bernard from missing his legs, as in his first invisible essay, and his arms were (for the truth must now all be told) round her waist ; and, moreover, he had never before imagined that any other hand than his own could possess the power of pulling him out of sight. For

these reasons he was utterly unconscious of his present condition, and alarmed at the extraordinary change in the young lady's countenance, he exclaimed, in an anxiously tender manner, "You are unwell, dear Alicia? Tell me, my dearest girl. Surely I have not hurt you unintentionally? I shall never forgive myself if I have."

She heard the words—looked wildly, as it seemed to him, in his face; then a cold shuddering came over her, and she cried convulsively, "Oh, this is too—too horrible!" The next moment she had fainted, and lay perfectly insensible on his shoulder.

Such was his extreme agitation, that he did not perceive what had happened till after he had placed her upon the sofa. Then crossing the room to pull the bell for assistance, the real state of the case was revealed, and he hastily made himself again conspicuous, when it was too late.

By the judicious application of the usual remedies poor Alicia recovered, and found herself surrounded by the servants, her lover anxi-

ously watching over her, and her own maid bathing her temples assiduously with one hand, and applying a smelling-bottle, that seemed already to have taken the skin off her nose, with the other.

“Where have I been? Oh — Bernard!” sobbed the patient.

This was quite enough to convince Martha that there had been a quarrel between the lovers: so being a plain-spoken woman, and perfectly satisfied that the men were always in the wrong on such occasions, she very uncere- moniously bade Bernard get out of the way, for he did more harm than good by standing there.

Before he had time either to obey or to mitigate the wrath of the offended lady's maid, the sound of wheels, and a thundering knock at the door, announced the return of the family, and in a few seconds the anxious father and mother and Emily, were added to the number of the invalid's attendants. All that could be ascer- tained was, that she had been suddenly and strangely attacked by an unaccountable fit of

partial blindness. This was her own statement ; but her maid contrived to catch the eye of her old master and mistress, and to indicate her opinion by a shake of the head and a pointed finger ; and that opinion, as given afterwards in words, was, “ that Mr. Audrey had misbehaved himself.”

“ Humph !” muttered Mr. Storer. “ Lovers’ quarrel again ! Partial blindness ! Little of both, mayhap. See to-morrow — too late now—wish they were all in bed.”

This latter wish seemed general throughout the party, and most advisable for the invalid, of whom Bernard took a very affectionate leave, hoped to see her quite well in the morning, shook hands in a hurried manner with the rest of the family, and then retired, to take up his quarters under the same roof with his uncle.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Alicia had retired to her apartment, and found herself alone with her friend Emily, she gave as clear an account as possible of what had occurred.

“ It serves me right, my dear,” she continued, “ for laughing at you when you thought the music-book was alive. What happened to me is far more extraordinary, you will allow. I heard his voice as usual, *close* to me, and felt myself supported by him, and yet I could not see him ! But it seemed as if I looked through the space where he must have been all the while, and I saw everything else very plain, and there were those Chinese figures nodding at me, and that horrid Indian god, with his great eyes

goggling at me. If I was at all superstitious I should think that he and the other idols had something to do with the matter. But I am convinced, after all, that it was nothing more than an attack of one of those extraordinary nervous disorders which are now going about, and as I am not usually subject to anything of the kind, I do not doubt but that I shall be very well to-morrow."

Emily affected to be of the same opinion, though she really felt certain indistinct apprehensions that the same cause which had given apparent life to the music-book had removed Bernard out of Alicia's sight. What that cause might be, was quite beyond her power to guess, but it appeared to her as though, instead of a nervous disorder, there was some kind of witchcraft "going about."

Martha now made her appearance with that sovereign specific called a basin of water-gruel, and a very long face.

"This will do you good, Miss," said she, speaking of the former as she placed it upon the

table, with tray, napkin, and spoons, all in due bedroom form.

“ Thank you, Martha,” replied her young mistress, “ but I am really quite well now. I was only frightened, I believe—a little nervous, that 's all.”

“ Oh, yes, to be sure, Miss,” observed Martha; “ and no wonder, I dare say. Those men have *such* ways with 'em ! not as I wish to insinivate anything disrespectful in particular against Mr. Audrey—and when he 's my master and comes to be married, I dare say it 'll be all very well ; and besides, he 's got a great many good pints about him, that I will say — but I a'n't forgot his tricks, nor how he sliely pinched Miss Read black and blue, and then pretended not to know nothing about the matter.”

The rest of Martha's conversation was of no sort of consequence to the progress of our tale ; but the remark concerning Miss Read's extraordinary and yet unsatisfactorily-explained pinches, recalled what that young lady had said

at the time to Alicia's mind, and kept her awake for several hours.

As a matter of course, Mrs. Storer saw her daughter for a few minutes, the last thing ere she retired to rest, and being satisfied with her apparent recovery, returned to her own room, where her husband yet lay awake to hear her report.

"Well, my dear," said he, "how 's Ally?"

"She seems very comfortable and well now," replied the good lady. "I expect, after all, it was nothing more than some foolish love quarrel that she's already ashamed of. However, they parted very good friends."

"Ay, ay," observed Mr. Storer; "sitting on his knee, it seems. Bit of a struggle, suppose—little too rough, eh?"

"*Something* more than that I should think," replied Mrs. Storer laughing.

"Don't know," said the merchant, "don't know. Remember how it was when I came courting you. Long while afore could get you on my knee—terribly afraid. Bad as if

you thought I was ‘The Fire King,’ and all your clothes would be burnt off your back,* and Lord knows what mischief beside. Got you there at last though—never repented it, hope, eh?”

“Why not often, I must confess, my dear,” was the good-humoured reply; and shortly after the easy-going couple were fast asleep.

In the mean while our hero sought his lonely room at Covent Garden, and was much perplexed concerning the untoward event of the evening. “What!” thought he, “is my visible existence to be dependent upon the caprice of every one who may fancy a pull at my ear? The thing is monstrous! I have, however, at present only to look sharp after Alicia, as no one else would think of taking such a liberty. Poor girl! I am sorry for her fright; but it is

* The Fire-King one day rather amorous felt,
So he mounted his hot copper filly;
His breeches and boots were of tin, and the belt
Was made of cast-iron, for fear it should melt
From the heat of the copper colt’s belly.

Rejected Addresses.

quite as well that she fainted. It will be so much the more easy to persuade her that it was all fancy."

In spite of all his ingenuity, however, he lay long restless, sleepless, and uneasy; and once or twice, as he rolled over from side to side, and felt his left ear rub upon the pillow, he dreaded that the friction might be sufficient to produce his disappearance, and stretched forth his arms to ascertain if they were visible above the bed-clothes. Then, as we are all wont when lying awake, and under the influence of any one idea, he thought of the various situations in which he might, and probably should, be placed, wherein, without any act or volition of his own, he must suddenly become invisible. He pictured to himself that when travelling in a carriage, if perchance he leaned his head for a moment against the side, he would cease to be apparent from the instantaneous jolting of the vehicle, when crossing a rut, or going over a loose stone. If he ventured to lie down on board a ship, the pitching of the vessel would jerk him out of sight immediately. And so he continued to

torment himself with anticipations, till, between sleeping and waking, he resolved always to lie upon his right side ; and shortly afterwards began to dream of going through the world, holding fast by his right ear, as the only means of preserving his station amid his fellow creatures. Then came a vision, in which he manfully resolved to have the dangerous and offending member cut away by a skilful surgeon. All seemed prepared for the operation ; his courage was at a pitch far higher than requisite for the endurance of the necessary pain, when, lo ! the chirurgical professor had no sooner taken the part in his hand, than the patient entirely disappeared ; all around stood aghast, and there was an end of the business. There appeared to be no way of getting rid of the ear by the agency of others, and the perfect uselessness of a looking-glass, under existing circumstances, prevented him from eradicating the evil with his own hands.

Having every reason to imagine that the generality of our readers will consist of persons of an unusually serious turn of mind, we have

some fears lest these midnight terrors of our hero may seem improbable and ludicrous in the eyes of certain of the ultra sedate. Should such be the case, we boldly appeal to their serene self-recollections, and ask if they have not been themselves visited by dreams, equally, if not far more ridiculous, and all without any visible or invisible cause for the mental uproar, similar to that by which poor Bernard Audrey was afflicted?

When the uncle and nephew met at breakfast, the latter mentioned that Miss Storer had had a fainting fit the preceding evening, and that he had despatched a servant at an early hour with a note to inquire how she had passed the night, and how she found herself in the morning.

“Nothing of any consequence, I hope?” inquired Sir William.

“No, I trust not,” replied Bernard. “Indeed she had recovered before I came away.”

“Your looks do not agree with your words, young gentleman,” observed the knight; “I should feel much concerned if she were really

ill, for, without any intention of flattering you on the subject of your choice, I assure you she is a great favourite of mine. Indeed I am greatly pleased with the father and mother likewise. To be sure they are neither elegant nor fashionable people: but then, they do not pretend to be so; and as times go, it is perfectly delightful and refreshing to find persons who are really what they seem. When you have seen as much of mankind as I have, you will unfortunately know how scarce such characters are."

The nephew agreed precisely with these observations—a few more words on the same subject were added on both sides—and then a servant entered with a note from Alicia, which stated that she was perfectly well, and intended to go about five miles out of town with Emily, to visit one of their old schoolfellows, with whom, most likely, they should dine, and not return till late in the evening.

Bernard could not help thinking that there was a certain air of stiffness and restraint in the style of the writer; and felt that he should not be *quite* easy till he could again see and con-

verse with her, after the occurrence of the preceding evening.

“Free and easy!—just like her father,” observed Sir William; “no apology, you see. She wishes to see her old acquaintance, takes advantage of the fineness of the day, and so goes without form or ceremony, feeling that, as she means no slight, no offence can be taken. That is the character of the family—openness and candour, and perhaps, a *little* too much of contempt for the prejudices of those who regulate their movements by the received forms of etiquette. But these are good points to begin life with, Bernard. I am afraid that too many of us foolishly sacrifice much of our own happiness, by a cowardly subserviency to the whims and caprices of fashion and custom. To a certain extent they *must* be submitted to—it is in vain to resist if one means to belong to society. But native good sense, Sir, strength of mind, a natural sweetness of disposition, and affection for the object of her choice, are all that a man ought to desire in a wife. Such a woman is like, (excuse me for comparing your Alicia to

so huge an animal,) she is like one of our elephants in the East, just sufficiently trained and walking with all its native majesty and apparent freedom; whereas your *merely* fashionable young lady (it is well none of the dear creatures are within hearing) is really more like one of those learned pig-like animals shut up in your menageries here, and taught to play the same eternal tricks, over and over again, to every fresh set of company."

"You may rely upon it, my dear uncle," said Bernard, "that I shall not fail to let Alicia know the compliment which you have paid her, and I have no doubt she will value it according to its *magnitude*."

"You are a saucy fellow, Bernard," rejoined Sir William, "but tell her what you like. However, if you had been in the East you would be aware that the elephant is often made use of as a symbol of majesty and beauty, and that it possesses a degree of instinct wonderfully approaching our boasted reason, and a most extraordinary sense of gratitude—is capable of the strongest attachments, and is keenly alive to in-

juries. I remember once, when I was ordered up the country—”

“ Oh !” thought Bernard, “ I have heard *that* before !” But respect for his uncle enabled him to assume an air of attention to the thrice told tale, which we shall not inflict upon the reader, inasmuch as it had no direct bearing or influence on the story with which we have undertaken to go through, and which we apprehend, from present appearances, will extend to a sufficiently wearisome length without such adjuncts.

When the knight’s tale and the breakfast were ended, Bernard expressed his intention of going to Russell Square, thinking he might enjoy a few minutes’ conversation with Alicia before her departure, or perhaps be admitted to accompany her in her excursion.

“ I am going into the city on business,” said Sir William, “ and as I calculated that you would be better engaged than with me, I have promised to dine with my old friend Sir Marmaduke Bonus, who has some thoughts of standing for the vacant directorship. He will

be glad to see you likewise, I am sure; but I do not press you to go, as we shall be all old East Indians together, and I hardly think you would find the thing quite to your taste. I wish he was, in some respects more like our friend Storer; but Sir Marmaduke goes with the stream, and we dine at seven o'clock—that will be eight—so that I shall be out *later* than I could desire—probably till twelve or one o'clock. But I had almost forgotten one thing, which, as you will have an hour to spare to-day, you will be able to manage very well; and that is, to look in at the coachmaker's, and see the carriage that I have ordered for you. There are some little matters of ornament, and the style of painting your arms, on which I thought it better to wait for your decision. Storer said that their family had not got any arms; but that's all nonsense—and his daughter an heiress too!—So I went to the Heralds' College, and soon set that matter right. Here they are, Or, a chevron azure between three ships' sterns proper.

“Old Sir Hauberk Mooney tells me, that he

has no doubt the Storer's are of a very ancient family, and recommends the ships' sterns to be painted after the model of the old Roman galleys. But it strikes me that would be excessively ridiculous now-a-days. A precious figure the creaking, clumsy, barge-like old things, with their banks of rowers ranged like books, shelf above shelf, would cut in a sneezer off the Cape! But, however, please yourself; I see my chariot is waiting, and so give my love to Alicia, and good morning to you."

Bernard found no one but Mrs. Storer at home in Russell Square. The young ladies had gone with her husband into the city, where the carriage was to drop him at the counting-house, and then proceed to Clapham with its fair charge.

"They have given you the slip this morning," observed the good lady, smiling: "I told them it was hardly fair; but they both seemed extremely anxious to see several of their young acquaintances, whose parents live in the neigh-

bourhood of Clapham. And they said that you would be very glad to have a morning to yourself, as you must have a great many things to see about, and purchases to make. So our family is quite broken up for the day, as Mr. Storer is obliged to dine with a party of gentlemen, who are to meet on some East India business, at Sir Marmaduke Bonus's, and I mean to go to Hackney to spend the day with a poor friend of mine, a widow, whom I knew when she was in affluent circumstances."

Bernard could not object to these arrangements; but finding himself thus suddenly "cut" for four-and-twenty hours, he was far from being in the very best of all possible humours, as he drove from Russell Square to the coachmaker's. The business which took him there was soon despatched, and he was about to leave the place, uncertain where he should go next, when, passing between two ranks of carriages, he found himself in contact with one of his most intimate college "particulars." The greeting was mutually warm, and his

friend insisted upon his making one of a choice party of Oxonians, who had agreed to dine together that day at the Thatched House.

“You’ll find a capital set, I assure you, Audrey,” continued the gay inviter; “I won’t tell you who of Christ’s besides ourselves—leave that to surprise you. Picked men, as you may suppose, with Cumberland and Westmoreland from Queen’s, and Jones of Jesus, of course, and last, though not least, a lad after my own heart from Pembroke, who can give us a stir up ‘with a will,’ as the sailors say, if we happen to fall ‘a nodding.’”

“Book me by thy coach, honest friend,” said Bernard, highly pleased. “At what hour do you start?”

“Dinner on table at six precisely,” replied his friend. “What are you going to do with yourself in the mean while?”

“Anything—nothing,” answered Bernard.

“And I have just the same sort of important business on my hands,” observed the other; “so perhaps we can manage our affairs together for an hour or so.”

The mornings of idlers are so very much alike, that it is quite unnecessary to follow the young gentlemen in their drive, ride, and peregrination. Suffice it to say, that in common with most loungers who happen to have plenty of money in their pockets, they got rid of a certain portion of it, by purchasing sundry very pretty-looking, but by no means very useful trifles—things which acquire a value from being carefully and tastefully displayed in shop-windows and glass-cases, and being dubbed with the magic word “fashionable,” which frequently elevates things of still lower worth into temporary importance.

Bernard purchased an elegant little toy-like gold watch, chain, and seals, for Alicia, and a silver-gilt snuff-box for himself, though he had already one in his pocket.

At six o'clock there was much greeting and shaking of hands, and a few formal introductions. A smile was on every face, and all appeared to have come with the determination of being merry.

Then came the dinner.

Not until after the cloth was drawn, did these "merry men all" reserve the fire of their exuberant spirits. The joint and the joke were cut together, and, as one inveterate punster observed, if they had not been well supplied with game, it would have been of little consequence, since they seemed to be capable of "making game of anything." For this wretched hit, he was of course fined a bumper, as was likewise another bright youth, who, upon being asked if he had "counted" how many head of grouse his father had sent up, replied, "No, but I *'count* this that I'm cutting up to be as fine a bird as ever came to table."

Little, however, boots it, when in youth and health the soul is brimful of glee, by what means the effervescence is excited! It will continue to sparkle on, like champagne, till the very dregs of the feast. It did so on the present occasion. Bernard Audrey, who was as gay as any of his companions, appeared to have lost sight of his invisible difficulties, and it was two in the morning before they separated.

It had been his intention to walk straight

home to his quarters in Covent Garden, but somehow, he knew not why, the topography of the streets was not correctly delineated before his mind's eye. He had parted with a friend at the corner of St. James's Street and Piccadilly, and pursued his way along the latter, with a perfect conviction that all was right. He then recollected that there were some alleys by which he might cross into Leicester Square, and thence into Drury Lane; but as the navigation was somewhat intricate, he resolved to be prudent, and take the coach road; so he turned to the left, and overshooting the mark, soon got bewildered in the maze of streets about Soho Square and the Seven Dials, and at last was gaping about him in the well-known purlieus of St. Giles's.

As he crossed the Broad Street, and caught a glimpse of the church, he first became sensible of where he was; and the next thing that drew his attention was the figure of a man, skulking suspiciously in a doorway, and apparently on the watch, as he naturally supposed for no good purpose. The character of the neighbourhood,

and the lateness of the hour, were fully sufficient to justify his suspicions, which received additional strength from the circumstance of the watchman being off his beat. A few steps farther brought him to the corner of a narrow street, in which, at the distance of some yards, he beheld too ill-looking men whispering beneath the lamp.

“ I *must* inquire the way to Covent Garden of some one,” thought he ; “ and if the fellows should attempt any violence, I have nothing to do but to give my ear a twitch and disappear.”

Accordingly he very civilly accosted the strangers, and asked his road. One of them replied that he must go straightforward, and then turn to the right, and then to the left, and afterwards to the left again, and that would bring him into a street, at the end of which he would find another, with an alley on the right, which went round a corner, where he would find a street going a little to the left ; and was proceeding in the same style, when Bernard interrupted him by saying,

“ You are mistaken in your man, my lad. If

you 've a mind to put me in the right way, well and good; if not, keep your jokes to yourself."

"I say, Dick," observed the other man, "I 'm dashed if he an't a beak."

"Look ye, my tight un," said the first, "you 'd better follow your nose some other way, for ve 're up to you."

"Give him a topper, Dick!" cried his comrade.

"Blow me if I an't a good mind," said Dick.

"Here goes, then!" exclaimed the other, flourishing his bludgeon, and getting between their intended victim and the main street.

Our hero lost not a moment in pulling his ear with the usual effect.

"Vy—you 've let the covey slip by you, Tom," cried Dick.

"No, I an't," was the reply. "He vos here a moment ago, and must ha' gone up the alley."

"Vell—it's as rum a go as ever I seed," said Dick. "I only just turned my head round to see as nobody vos a coming."

"I 'm dasht if I likes it," observed Tom.

“ There’s summut very mysterious about the consarn.”

As they were peeping about in the doorways and up a narrow alley, Bernard bethought himself that if he sent the fellows home in a fright, it would prevent them from committing any depredations for one night at least ; therefore, being provided with a tolerably stout walking-stick, he took an opportunity when Tom was whispering something to Dick, to give the latter a smart stroke across the shoulders.

The ruffian turned sharply round to act upon the defensive, but perceiving no assailant, accused his companion, who replied, “ How can you tell such a lie, Dick ! I never moved my stick a morsel ;” and as he was speaking, he himself received a sharp blow from the invisible Bernard as he was looking his comrade in the face.

An exclamation, half-prayer, half-oath, escaped from both the terrified ruffians, who then stood for a moment aghast, looking at each other. But Bernard, who now began to enjoy the sport, cast his eyes on Dick’s formidable bludgeon, which appeared much better suited

for the present exigency than the stick he had previously used ; so, approaching unseen, he snatched the weapon from its owner, and it immediately became invisible in his hands, and a moment afterwards was rattling briskly about the heads and shoulders of the two sinners, who forthwith made a very precipitate retreat, followed by their invisible foe, till they rushed into a narrow passage, where the want of light compelled him to give up the pursuit.

Returning from the chace in high spirits, our hero recollected that he had heard something fall upon the pavement, as if purposely dropped by one of the fellows, and searching the place, he found a canvass-bag, containing something that jingled. He was about to open and examine its contents by the light of a lamp, when he was reminded of his situation by its invisibility ; so he committed it to his pocket for a more convenient opportunity, and resolved to defer the pulling of his right ear till he should get into a better neighbourhood.

After regaining the Broad Street, he had not walked many yards ere he perceived a

hackney-coach standing by the side of the pavement, as if waiting for some one. This was an opportunity too tempting to be resisted. He looked in at the window, but perceived no one inside, and the coachman appeared to be dozing on the box.

“It is not far to Covent Garden,” said he to himself, “I am sure of that, though I don’t exactly know the way, so the fellow can put me down there, and come back again here for his fare. But, at all events, ‘possession is nine points of the law,’ so I’ll get in;” and without further ceremony, he gently opened the coach-door, scrambled over the steps, seated and shut himself up, pulled his right ear, and then the check-string, and desired the startled coachman to drive to Covent Garden.

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the reply, and then leaning back and speaking through the front window, honest Jarvey added in a low tone, “Is all right?”

“Yes, yes — all right,” said Bernard, throwing himself back in his seat, and highly pleased with his own ingenuity.

The vehicle began then to move forward with a velocity which promised soon to bring him to the end of his ride ; but it had not proceeded far ere there was a sudden stop.

“ What ’s the matter, coachy ? ” asked our hero, thrusting his head out of window.

“ Nothing very particular,” was the answer, “ only my splinter-bar has given way ; but I can tie it up and make it all right in half a minute. Lend us a hand here, will you, my good fellow ? ” continued the coachman, to a man who came up at the moment, as if to see what was passing. They were soon joined by a third, and then a whispering consultation seemed to be going on concerning the repairs of the splinter-bar.

“ If it will take long, I ’ll get out and walk,” said Bernard.

“ No ; it won’t take a minute,” replied the coachman ; “ only we must have some ropes from under the seat. Scarcely had he uttered these words when both doors of the coach were opened at the same moment, and the two men whose assistance had been requested, sprang in,

not to search for ropes, but each to seize upon one of the arms of our hero, who, ere he was aware of what was going forward found himself very securely handcuffed, with his arms behind him.

The two operators then seated themselves in the vehicle with all imaginable *sang froid*, and ordered the coachman to drive on. It was all in vain that Bernard exhibited divers symptoms of passion and indignation, and inquired the meaning of, and protested against, the treatment which he had received. The few replies which his captors condescended to make were extremely laconic and unsatisfactory.

“Ay, ay, go it, my lad !” said one.

“To be sure you’re innocent,” observed the other ; “I dare say you’ve got no idea what’s in this hamper ?” laying his hand on one which stood on the front seat, and which Bernard had not at first noticed, in consequence of the blind being up on that side.

In about ten minutes they reached a watch-house, where the prisoner was handed out with all due form and ceremony, and brought before the dogberry of the night.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Bernard and the hamper were placed before the nocturnal chief justice of the district, the former boldly demanded what charge could possibly be brought against him, and inveighed bitterly against the whole proceedings.

Without condescending to take any notice of his complaints, the red-night-capped functionary told the captors to make their charge. One of them immediately went close up to the judicial seat of office, and whispered something in the ear of his worship, who listened, shook his head, wrapped his watch-coat more closely round his legs, eyed the prisoner very attentively, and then said—

“Yes—there’s no other way. If the thing once gets wind, we shall want a troop of horse,

at least, to get him to the office ; so bring the hamper this way, and you, Murphy and Flanagan, hold the prisoner fast !”

The hamper was accordingly hauled into one corner ; the strings which confined the lid were cut, and it was lifted in a cautious manner, so that no one except the representative of his Majesty and the two officers, could see the contents.

“ It’s all plain enough !” said the former, “ so there’s no need for any more bones about the matter. Search him well first, and then pack him into the black hole.”

Bernard protested against this indignity, and insisted upon knowing what charge there was against him.

“ Don’t be a fool,” replied he of the red cap ; “ you know well enough — it’s all for your good — so don’t make an ass of yourself. Tell me your name, that’s all. What do you choose to call yourself ?”

Coupling this address with what had passed and what he had heard before, our hero now began to guess the real state of the case ; and

wishing to keep his own name out of the papers, made use of the first he could think of, and that happened to be the butcher's, "George Burrows," which was immediately inserted in the minutes of the court.

In the mean while the search was going on, and rude hands were rummaging his pockets.

"What are you by trade?" was the next question.

"Trade!" exclaimed Bernard; "I am a gentleman."

"Humph!" rejoined the president of the night. "Very well;" and the addition was made to the name of George Burrows.

"A *real* gentleman! by all the courts!" cried one of the officers, opening the canvass bag which our hero had picked up, after belabouring his two ugly acquaintances in St. Giles's. "A *real* gentleman, 'pon honour, and here's his certificate — as neat and well-made a set of skeletons and picks as one would wish to clap eyes on — and they've been pretty well used too!"

"D'rat him!" exclaimed the other, "but

he's done things snug, never to be nabbed afore now. See, here's a couple of tickers! One's a lady's,"—here he exhibited the small watch intended for Alicia. "And here's a brace of sneezers!" he continued, laying our hero's two snuff-boxes on the table.

"And, look ye!" cried the first, brandishing the cudgel, which the prisoner had used in his invisible exploit, and taken with him mechanically into the coach. "Look! This is just such an elegant stick as *gentlemen* always walk about with. My eyes! He's a reg'lar prime un, and 'll turn his hand to anything for an honest penny."

After a little more of this coarse jocularitv, our hero was permitted (in consequence of a pecuniary offer which he thought proper to make) to repose himself in a chair near the fire, instead of being shut up in the black-hole. But, as his captors remained deaf to all entreaties relative to the removal of the handcuffs, he was unable to avail himself of his left-ear-pulling privilege, and was consequently obliged to await the result of the morning. The hours

passed slowly. Now and then he lost all clear recollection of where he was, in a doglike sort of sleep, and then starting, would twist himself round to find an easier attitude, and altogether was most exceedingly uncomfortable both in body and mind.

At length the hour of removal came. He was placed in a hackney coach under the care of his captors, and conveyed to Bow-street, where, after waiting his turn, he was brought before the sitting magistrate, in order that the charge against him might be duly investigated. The bunches of skeleton keys and picklocks, a bottle of phosphorus and matches, which were likewise in the canvass-bag, the two watches, the two snuff-boxes, and the formidable bludgeon, were all produced and laid upon the table: and then the ominous hamper was brought in, and was found to contain a human body, which had evidently been disinterred.

The hackney-coachman was then called upon; and the account which he gave was, that he had been applied to to take a fare into the Borough, for which he was to get half-a-guinea

and a bottle of gin. That he had agreed to be in waiting at the appointed place at a quarter past two; but, his mind misgiving him that something wrong was going forward, he had given information, and was instructed to keep his appointment with the suspected persons, and to act afterwards as he had done. That accordingly he drove to the spot, exactly at a quarter-past two, and a few minutes afterwards, two men came and lifted the hamper into the coach; and then, after talking to each other some time, they went away all in a hurry, as if they were alarmed at something: but one of them said he should come back again presently, and slip into the coach, and then says he, "Directly I say 'all's right!' you drive off, as if old scratch was after you." To all this he added, that the prisoner had contrived to slip into the coach so cleverly, as quite to frighten him, for, that though he pretended to be asleep, he had looked round not a moment before, and didn't see a single soul in the street.

The next evidence was one of the officers,

who stated that being on the watch, in consequence of the information of the coachman, he saw the two men take the hamper as before described; but knowing that body-snatchers are generally desperate, he did not venture to face them alone, as his companion was then at some distance, looking out in another direction. But directly they were gone, and he saw them turn round the corner, he proceeded cautiously to join his comrade, and in so doing, observed the prisoner crossing Broad-street, and looking about him in a very suspicious manner. So, making no doubt that he was one of the gang, he resolved to keep his eye upon his motions, particularly as he then caught sight of his comrade, edging towards him. That the prisoner continued to cast his eyes round in all directions, as if seeking some one, till he came to the corner of the street down which the other two had gone, and then he immediately turned into it likewise.

The witness then went on to say, that he advanced cautiously to the said corner, and taking off his hat, contrived to peep round, and

saw all three of them, that is, the prisoner and the two men who brought the hamper to the coach, consulting together: but not being near enough to hear what they said, and being afraid they would perceive him, he drew back and determined to watch the coach, which, notwithstanding his vigilance, the prisoner contrived to enter about a quarter of an hour after without being perceived. But he could take his oath as to his person, having clearly caught sight of his face by the light of a lamp, as he himself was hid in the recess of a dark entry.

When Bernard was called upon for his defence, he requested to speak to the magistrate in private. There was some hesitation and whispering among the gentlemen on the bench, who agreed that if no other suspicions were attached to the prisoner, save those which might arise from being found in possession of the body, his request might with propriety have been granted; as it might be supposed from his appearance, that he was a young man of the medical profession, led by ardour for the acquirement of knowledge, foolishly to connect

himself with wretches whose calling it was to procure "subjects" for dissection. But the bludgeon, the two watches, two snuff-boxes, and, above all, the picklocks and phosphorus, proclaimed that he was a very different character. Therefore the magistrate replied,

"Unless you have some confession to make which may lead to the apprehension of your accomplices, in this or any other nefarious transaction in which you may have been engaged, I think it more proper, Burrows, that your defence should be public. But if you are disposed to assist the ends of justice, why, then ——."

"The ends of *justice* absolutely require it," said our hero.

"That alters the case," replied the magistrate—and in another minute he, and his clerk, and Bernard, were in a private room.

The latter then told his real name, stated that he had dined with a party of friends—how he had mistaken his road from St. James's Street—that he knew nothing of the men to

whom he had spoken, merely for the purpose of being directed on his way to Covent Garden—that, instead of assisting, they insulted him, and that on seeing a hackney coach he gladly availed himself of it, with the hope of getting out of his difficulties; and moreover, as he occupied the back seat, had not observed the hamper till the coach suddenly stopped, just before the officers made him their prisoner.

The magistrate shook his head gravely, and observed, “This is a poor come-off, Andrews, or Burrows, or whatever you call yourself. A man in your line could hardly want any direction from St. Giles’s to Covent Garden. However, let that pass. And now what have you to say about the picklocks and skeleton keys, and so on? Some of the instruments appear to be well calculated for picking pockets and shop-lifting. Do you *usually* take such things when you go to a dinner-party?”

“I know nothing of their use,” replied Bernard; “I found the bag lying on the pavement, where it was dropped by one of the men as he ran off.”

“ Ran off !” exclaimed the magistrate ; “ I thought you said they insulted you ?”

“ And so they did,” said the prisoner ; “ they attacked me with their bludgeons, but I——”

“ Don’t hesitate,” said the justice. “ What did you do ?”

“ Why I—I got the better of them,” continued our hero.

“ Upon my word !” exclaimed the magistrate, “ after what the officers say of the desperate character of the fellows, that was no small exploit ; but however, you carry a tolerably stout walking-stick. I suppose that is the last new fashion among gay young fellows who dine in St. James’s Street ?”

“ No, Sir,” observed Bernard, “ I snatched it from one of the ruffians, and I’ll be bound to say that he carries the marks of it about him. But we are wasting time, Sir. If you will allow me to write a note to my uncle, Sir William Audrey, at the Imperial Hotel, in Covent Garden, you shall soon be convinced of your error.”

By this time a crowd had collected in front

of the office, in consequence of a rumour that a "body snatcher" was in custody and undergoing examination. The magistrate judged it probable that the prisoner's accomplices might take advantage of the tumult, and attempt a rescue; therefore, he resolved not to remove the handcuffs, and instead of allowing him to write, despatched his own clerk to Sir William, to represent the state of the case.

The worthy knight had just entered the breakfast parlour when he received this strange communication, to which he listened very attentively, and then rang the bell, and desired to speak to Andrews, his nephew's valet, who soon made his appearance, and after some hesitation acknowledged that his master had not been at home since the preceding morning.

"But," continued he, "I did not feel at all uneasy, because I thought he must be in Russell Square, and most likely took a bed there. I hope nothing is the matter, Sir?"

"No, no — nothing particular, Andrews," replied Sir William, "help me on with my

great coat, will you—that's a good fellow.—And now, Sir," he continued, turning to the clerk, "I am at your service."

When they had, with some difficulty, effected an entrance into the office, the worthy knight was much shocked to find his nephew in such a disgraceful predicament. It was no time, however, for more than the necessary explanation. Their relationship was, of course, instantly acknowledged, and Sir William offered bail to any amount; while at the same time he ridiculed the idea that any charge of a serious nature could possibly be brought against Bernard.

After some consideration, the magistrate thought himself justified in accepting this offer, and liberating the prisoner, principally, as he said, because there were no grave-clothes about the corpse, and therefore he should not be able to commit him for felony. The handcuffs were then removed, and Sir William and Bernard made their exeunt by a side-door, and were very soon afterwards at breakfast, in the snug little parlour of the former. Something of a lecture was to be expected under existing

circumstances: but upon the whole the old knight was very merciful, "for he still remembered that he once was young," and his nephew certainly had not hitherto been in the habit of getting into rows, nor of making his appearance at public offices.

"These things are very disreputable, Bernard," said he; "I would not for the world that our friend Storer should hear of it, for his prejudices are very strong against what you call 'bloods,' and yesterday he expressed his satisfaction that you did not belong to any set of that kind."

"My dear uncle," replied our hero, "I felt the awkwardness of publicity directly I found myself in the ridiculous and embarrassing situation from which you so kindly hastened to relieve me, and I took the precaution to conceal my real name, as every foolish transaction, somehow, finds its way into the newspapers."

"Well, so far all is well," observed Sir William; "but another time, when you dine with a party where there is the remotest chance of

your taking a few glasses more than ordinary, always have your carriage in waiting. Remember, you have now a certain station in life to support, and are no longer a mere Oxford-man. But I will not tire you with a long sermon. I see that you are heartily ashamed of the whole affair, and, to tell you the truth, your appearance is by no means improved from your adventures. I think you had better ‘turn in,’ as the sailors have it, after breakfast.”

“ I certainly do not feel any better for my rough night’s lodging,” replied Bernard, “ but I shall be as well as ever when I have shaved and dressed myself, and then I ’m off to Russell Square, as I wish to take Alicia to see my carriage.”

“ Ah !” cried Sir William, “ that reminds me of something which this business of yours quite drove out of my head. The young ladies were to have called on their way back last night to take up Mr. Storer at Sir Marmaduke’s, but the carriage came without them, and the coachman brought a note to say that they should remain at Clapham ; therefore you need not hurry

yourself about calling, as Mr. Storer is always in the city now at ten o'clock. So, go and lie down quietly, and get rid of your fatigue, while I make two or three calls connected with this directorship, for which my friend Sir Marmaduke is resolved to stand. I have promised him all my interest — and I have not forgotten yours. But matters are not ripe yet, so we must keep all snug for the present. However, as you are a party concerned, I'll just give you a hint. What think you of a seat in parliament? Storer is delighted with the idea, and prophesies that you will make a shining orator. But we must have no more night-work, nor bludgeon-fighting with body-snatchers. I really am surprised how you contrived to beat off a couple of such desperate wretches.—Well, well, I won't be too hard upon you, for I see you are tired of the subject, and 'ne quid nimis' is a very excellent maxim, particularly for us elderly gentlemen. I have some notion of taking Storer's dinner to-day, 'all in a family way,' as he says, if I can make it out. Perhaps you'll be there too, and very likely the fair truants

will have found their way back by that time. In the mean while go to bed — go to sleep, and dream — of what you please — your mistress, or your first speech.”

“ My dear uncle,” said our hero, “ I know not how to be sufficiently grateful to you, nor sufficiently ashamed of myself, when I think of the very different manner in which our time has been spent since we parted yesterday.”

“ Say no more about it !” exclaimed Sir William, seizing his nephew’s hand and squeezing it kindly.

“ There was a time when I might have done just the same, only I can’t say that I ever was man enough to have fought myself out of the clutches of a brace of resurrectionists quite so cleverly as you did. When a young man sees his error, my dear fellow, and confesses it candidly, as you do, an old fellow must be much more cross-grained than your uncle to go on harping upon the same string. If Alicia had stayed at home, nothing of the sort would have happened. A little gipsy ! it was all her fault.”

The worthy knight had by this time talked

himself into high spirits ; and as his nephew's happiness was the end of all his actions and plans, he resolved, contrary to his previous intentions, to give him something more than a glimpse of what was going forward for his benefit. Therefore, in the joy and pride of his heart, he informed Bernard with as little circumlocution as might be compatible with the requisite explanation of a complex, "dove-tailed" arrangement, that his own and Mr. Storer's interest among the East India stock-holders, and in East India transactions, were of sufficient importance to induce Sir Marmaduke to promise, that in the event of his election he would nominate our hero as a member for his borough of Trevotain in Cornwall.

"And then," continued Sir William, with somewhat very like tears in his eyes, "when the family title is recovered, as well as the estate, and I see you a baronet, a married man, and an M.P. I shall have little else to wish for. How happy my poor brother would have been had he lived to see the day when all our youthful dreams of ancestral honours and importance

shall be realized ! But I shall make a fool of myself if I continue to talk longer on the subject, so God bless you, my dear fellow ! We meet again at five. No thanks—no ‘ nonsense,’ as Storer would say. We know each other’s feelings, and that ’s enough.”

When Bernard was left alone, his thoughts naturally turned upon his future prospects. Whichever way he looked, all would have seemed bright and cloudless throughout the whole horizon, but for certain dark spots, caused by the gratification of his wild and foolish wish ; but these he trusted would soon be dispersed, and throwing himself upon the bed, he resolved to indulge in pleasant fancies. So—anticipating his marriage, his return to parliament, the assumption of his ancestral title, and the various enjoyments to be procured by wealth, all of which now appeared within his reach, he fell asleep. Then, in spite of the brilliant imaginings which had lulled him to repose, his dreams were haunted by the image of the elderly pale-faced old gentleman, with his two boxes of ointment, who seemed to come and

go, flitting by and bending over him, mowing, chattering, grimacing, and laughing, and scornfully inquiring how he liked the power with which he had so earnestly desired to be invested. As he turned away to behold pleasanter objects, the pallid figure seemed nimbly to shift its position, and holding up a large black veil, triumphantly contrived to intervene and shut out the more distant prospect whichever way he looked. Provoked beyond measure, he attempted to snatch the dark, flag-like omen from the hands of his hateful persecutor; but though it ever seemed close upon him, even so as to prevent him from breathing freely, no sooner was his hand stretched forth, than the shadowy creature glided beyond arm's length, and fluttered his black ensign in defiance.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE must now trace the movements of the young ladies.

After Alicia's fright, as she lay upon her pillow, her thoughts naturally ran upon what had just occurred; and the more she compared her own sensations with the positive manner in which Charlotte Read had formerly spoken of feeling Bernard grasp her by the arms, and hearing him utter an ejaculation, although unable to see him, the more evident it became that their cases were of a similar nature.

Full of this idea, she went to Emily's room early in the morning, and it soon appeared that the thoughts of each had taken the same direction.

"You know, my dear," said Alicia, "that, until that unfortunate day, we never knew

Charlotte to be guilty of anything like a falsehood. I fear that I have been too hasty, and have used her very ill. Indeed—I confess it was a hard trial to part in such a manner from one whom I had loved so long—but what *could* I do? How *could* I believe what was contrary to the evidence of my own senses? Yet, last night, I had a clear proof that they are not to be depended upon, since they contradict each other. I felt him support me—I heard his voice—and yet I could not see him! And then that strange business of your's too! I declare I am terrified, and quite miserable! Can it be possible that we are all three afflicted with some species of insanity? I know the nerves are very strange things, and we have read and heard many strange tales about hypochondriacs; but then they have always been weak and elderly people, whereas all three of us are young, and seldom know what it is to have anything the matter with us. At all events, I cannot be easy till I have seen Charlotte Read—and so if you will go with me, we will beg papa to let us have the carriage to-day, and go to Clapham,

for I am sure she is come home before now, as she and Mary Williams never were *very* particular friends."

"I shall be most glad to accompany you," replied Emily, "for to acknowledge the truth, I have been very uneasy myself since that strange affair of the music-book, though I determined never to mention it to you again, because I wished not to interrupt your happiness."

The two friends then made their little preparations for the intended visit and reconciliation, and mutually agreed that, as they had been in error, it was their duty to ask Charlotte's pardon.

When their request was made at breakfast, it was immediately granted by Mr. Storer, who said the ride would do Ally good, and that he could go to Sir Marmaduke's very well in a hack. "But if you're late, girls," he added, "and don't suppose you'll be very early, Peter must come back over Westminster bridge—take me up in Harley-street—save me an hour or two, mayhap, besides coach-hire—excuse to get away—don't like late hours."

When the fair friends reached Clapham, they found that Charlotte had returned from Rutlandshire two days before. The meeting was of course extremely ceremonious and stiff on the part of the recently-discarded very particular friend. She opened her large black eyes, as if with especial wonder at the unexpected honour conferred upon her, and with correspondent distance and dignity begged her visitors to be seated.

Poor Emily sat down and burst into tears; but Alicia, whose performances in that line were not very frequent, directly asked Miss Read if she could possibly forgive her after the unworthy treatment which she had experienced.

“Yes,” replied Charlotte, magnanimously. “I knew that you were under some strange misconception concerning me, and I told you so; and it gives me infinite delight to find that you have discovered your error. But,” she continued, in a somewhat more measured tone, as if conscious of her own superiority, “you will doubtless have the goodness to explain the

cause of that very sudden and extraordinary change somewhat more explicitly than when ——."

"Spare me!" exclaimed Alicia; "I confess myself to have been altogether wrong. My conduct, after so many years of tried friendship, was utterly unjust towards you, and I beg your pardon. I ask your forgiveness; and if you knew how sincerely I regret what has passed, I am sure you would not hesitate to grant it."

"Nor *will* I!" exclaimed Miss Read; "you have said quite enough, Alicia. When I left you, it was more in pity than in anger, I assure you; but I felt that the step was necessary for your peace of mind, as well as for my own justification."

The next moment the two very particular friends were in each other's arms, and the eyes of neither were perfectly dry: and then it was poor Emily's turn; but as she was unable to speak audibly upon the subject, she compensated by the affectionate warmth of her embraces, and was equally again received into

favour by the now happy and generous-minded Charlotte. So in a few minutes the three friends were sitting side by side, and hand in hand, upon the same sofa, as confident and confiding in each other as before the commencement of their invisible disasters.

“ I shall insist upon your spending the day with me,” said Charlotte.

“ But your mother, your father, and your brother,” observed Alicia, “ perhaps it would scarcely be agreeable to them, after what has passed ?”

“ Make your mind easy on that score,” replied Miss Read ; “ they know nothing about the matter. I was sure that all *must* be explained before *long* : and I knew the goodness of your heart and of Emily’s too ; and so kept the whole of this foolish business to myself. So that is all settled, and we’ve got beds for you if you will remain where you are.”

“ Generous Charlotte !” exclaimed Alicia, again embracing her recovered friend, “ how could I, even for a moment, be blinded to your excellence ? Yes. We will accept your kind

invitation, for I have *much* to say to you. Strange things have happened, so *strange*, indeed, that I can hardly be offended if you doubt what I have to tell. Oh ! I never knew the real value of a true friend before ! If you had refused to be reconciled to me, I know not what would have become of me ; for there is no other person to whom I could have applied for advice.”

Then, after a proper preface, followed a particular statement of the occurrence of the preceding evening, and Emily related the mysterious movements of the music-book.

Charlotte listened with great attention ; but was unable to arrive at any other conclusion than that they must, all three, at different periods, have been attacked by an extraordinary nervous affection.

“ You know, my dears,” she said, “ that these nervous disorders are very strange things, and we must not pretend to judge of them by our former experience. Who ever heard of a school girl fainting away ? And yet we know that many grown up persons do. I’ll just tell

you what happened to me the other day in Rutlandshire. There was a young gentleman took it into his head, or heart, as he said, to make me an offer: and, would you believe it! although I had not the smallest hesitation in refusing him, I declare the thing came upon me so suddenly, that it gave me quite a turn, and I was positively ill. Now, if such a thing had happened some years ago, it would only have furnished me with something to laugh at, and perhaps I might have boxed his ears. As it was, his apparent earnestness affected me in a very different manner, and made me absolutely nervous and low-spirited, for he really is a very worthy good sort of young man enough, and I could not help pitying him for having been so imprudent as to make a declaration to a person of whom he knew so little as he did of me."

The introduction of such a subject naturally led the friends astray from the main point in debate. The various qualifications of the said young gentleman were canvassed — tolerably positive opinions were given relative to *man-*

kind in general—and gradually the conversation veered round, till the whole of its interest settled upon Bernard Audrey.

When the head-knocking, arm-pinching affair at Maxdean was referred to, Charlotte avowed that she had frequently felt much perplexed when thinking of it; but, after what her friends had so positively stated, resolved to believe that she must have been knocked down by the branch of a tree.

The debate was interrupted by visitors, and then again by dinner; but, it was renewed in the evening, and carried on till midnight, when after a multitude of comparisons, recollections of trivial occurrences, and above all, the circumstance of his having been near, if not present, at all the unaccountable scenes, it was agreed, "*nem. con.*" that there must be something extraordinary and mysterious about our hero.

It was settled that Charlotte should return, and spend a few days with her friends in Russell Square, for the purpose of assisting, or

rather of taking the lead, in watching the conduct of Alicia's lover.

On the following day, therefore, they arrived at Mr. Storer's in time to dress for dinner; and at the usual hour were at table with the merchant and his lady, Sir William and Bernard Audrey, and an elderly, stout, weather-beaten, plain-spoken gentleman, named Harding, the captain of an East Indiaman.

Mr. Storer was in high spirits. The canvassing for his friend Sir Marmaduke Bonus had gone on gloriously during the morning; and he felt not a little pleased to see Miss Read, who was a great favourite with him, reinstated in his daughter's confidence.

All the party seemed perfectly at ease except our hero, who appeared dull, and occasionally absent. When he had accosted Alicia in the drawing-room, and expressed his anxiety respecting her health, and a hope that she had perfectly recovered from her late attack, she had answered briefly, "perfectly," while her eyes were fixed upon him with a strange, cold,

scrutinizing expression, very different from any thing which he had ever before observed, and certainly very different from what any lover would wish to see in those of his mistress.

It was neither the time nor place for inquiry or explanation. Dinner was soon announced ; and when seated between Alicia and the East India captain, he became sensible that the dark eyes of Miss Read, as she faced him, were strangely expressive. Even those of Emily ever and anon shot a furtive glance towards him.

The power of female eyes is too well known and too proverbial to be dwelt upon. He clearly read that there was something wrong, and endeavoured to surmise what it could be. Was it possible that they could have guessed his secret? He decided that it was of too improbable a nature to enter into their imaginations. Could they have heard of his nocturnal adventures? That again was unlikely, as they were known only to his uncle and himself.

But the man who has a dangerous secret to keep, is ever suspicious ; and his uneasiness be-

came so evident that it was observed at length by Mr. Storer, who exclaimed,

“Madeira with you, Bernard! — Down in the mouth to-day — eh? Day’s absence — humph! glad of one by and by. Give Ally some wine — do her good.”

Alicia went through the little ceremony as courteously as usual, and our hero, vexed at having attracted attention, rallied, entered into conversation, and resolved to conduct himself precisely as usual. In this endeavour however, he somewhat overstepped the mark, and a significant glance was exchanged between the young ladies, on observing his suddenly recovered spirits. At the dessert he made himself extremely active, and was in the act of offering some fruit to Alicia, when she suddenly exclaimed,

“Bless me Bernard! What have you been doing with your hand?”

His neighbour, the captain, cast his eyes in the direction indicated, and as our hero held a plate of wall-fruit, unceremoniously turned back the cuff of his coat sleeve, and observed

bluntly, "If I'd met you in any other company, I'd have sworn you'd spent last night in irons, for those are exactly the marks of handcuffs."

The abruptness of this discovery and remark threw Bernard entirely off his guard; and however unheroical such weakness may appear, he felt that his face was suffused with a crimson glow, which, of course, was not unobserved by the watchful and suspicious young ladies.

Sir William, who appeared not to notice what was passing, now adroitly called off the captain's attention by some inquiry relative to the East India trade. Alicia was too much agitated by what she had just heard to venture a repetition of her question; and in a short time afterwards the ladies retired.

"Well, my dear Charlotte," said Alicia, "what do you think? There certainly is something *very* strange about him. Is there not? Pray tell me, without reserve, what your opinion is."

"I must then candidly acknowledge," replied Charlotte, "that I do perceive a very consider-

able change, both in Mr. Audrey's manners and appearance, since we were together at Maxdean; and to say the truth, it is such as I think I should have noticed with great surprise even if you had not made any communication to me on the subject. He used to be so perfectly free and unembarrassed, and so open and careless, that you know we all three used to feel quite at home with him, and for my own part, I declare that I treated him with as much familiarity as if he had been my own brother; but now I should just as soon think of romping with the Great Mogul."

"I am not surprised at what you say," observed Alicia with a sigh; "I declare I was myself quite frightened just now, when his countenance changed so at Captain Harding's remark. I really thought he was going to make a quarrel of it before us, and yet but the other day he would have been the first to join in a laugh at the oddity of the observation. I don't know what to think of it, but there must be *some* cause for these alterations."

"I wonder what he can have been doing

with his hands," said Emily : " he did not give you any answer, if you recollect."

" I will ask him abruptly," said Charlotte, " for although I do not conceive that *that* can be a matter of much importance, there ought to be *no* secrets now. And you must summon your resolution, Alicia, and be very plain and candid with him, and tell him that you have observed the great change in him lately, and ask him at once, directly and plainly, what the reason of it is. Situated as you are, there must be *no* mysteries between you ; and if he should attempt any prevarication or concealment, my advice is, that, however painful it may be to your own feelings, you should at once——"

" What can possibly be the meaning of this?" exclaimed Mrs. Storer, who had been amusing herself by looking over the newspapers at one fireplace while the young people were chatting at the other. " It must refer to Sir William Audrey ! Do, pray, my dear girls, come and look, and see what you can make of it !"

The three friends hurried to the farther end of the drawing-room, and Charlotte took the

paper and read an account of our hero's examination, under the name of Burrows, at Bow Street. The reporter had given a very dark colouring to the charge up to the time when the prisoner desired to speak to the magistrate in private. The paragraph then ran as follows:—"Such a request from a ruffian against whom the evidence brought forward seemed perfectly conclusive, created much surprise, which increased not a little when the worthy magistrate thought fit to admit this violator of the consecrated depositories of the departed to a secret interview. Certainly the fellow was well, and even fashionably dressed, and moreover was young, rather tall, and good-looking. We much question whether a poor creature in rags would have obtained a similar indulgence. We have no wish to cast any reflections on the worthy magistrate, but we have been given to believe, and are inclined to imagine, that the laws were provided equally for the poor and the rich, and that the moral guilt of an offender is by no means dependent upon the sum of money which he may happen to have in his pocket or at his

command, nor upon the appearance which he may contrive to make by the fruits of his delinquencies. Under these circumstances we have no doubt that the reader will be equally astonished with ourselves to learn that a fellow, on whom the usual implements of picking pockets and housebreaking were found, together with a variety of watches and snuff-boxes, and who was taken in the act of running away with a corpse, was, after this *secret* investigation, almost immediately liberated, as we were told, in consequence of the interference of a wealthy East Indian, on whom his Majesty some months since conferred the honour of knighthood, and who happened, fortunately for the delinquent, to be lodging at an hotel in Covent Garden."

The following observations appeared in a subsequent column.

"Under the head 'Bow Street' our readers will find an account of a somewhat extraordinary transaction, which indeed appeared so much so to us, that we have thought it our duty to make farther inquiry into the particulars, and find that our reporter has stated all

that occurred with his usual correctness. We have no hesitation in saying, that the public have a right to expect some explanation of those important reasons which alone could justify the release of such a miscreant. In the mean while we warn the parties that we have an eye on their movements, as they will be convinced when we state that Sir W * * A * * was seen, not many minutes after, walking arm in arm with the hero of the scene, not a hundred miles from the Hummums. Can this affair have any relation to the rumour of an expected vacancy in a certain assembly, by the resignation of an honourable member for a certain borough in Cornwall, an event which, we are told, may be anticipated should a certain candidate be successful in obtaining the object of his ambition among the kings of Leadenhall Street? If we speak in parables to the uninitiated, the parties concerned know well what we allude to, and let them hesitate before they again presume to interfere with the course of justice, or in their secret divans venture to traffic with the rights of the people of England.

We close this article for the present by merely observing, that we understand the name of Burrows is common in Cornwall, and if our suspicions are correct, this will be another proof of the absolute necessity of parliamentary reform."

The fair cabinet council were discussing these paragraphs when the gentleman made their appearance, and very shortly afterwards Miss Read contrived to seat herself next to our hero, and repeat Alicia's question relative to the marks upon his hands. The effect was now very different from that previously produced, as he had prepared a reply in the interim. Without the smallest hesitation he said carelessly, "It was a foolish affair. I dined with a party of college friends yesterday, and we amused ourselves by lifting weights, and I twisted a rope round my wrist, in order to enable me to raise up more than I could with my hands."

Sir William was near enough to hear this question and reply, though he appeared to be engaged in reading the newspaper which had so recently occupied the attention of the ladies.

"Got the wrong paper, Sir William," said

Mr. Storer. "Here's one—right sort. Like to see both sides—see what 's doing then—eh? No use looking always one way. Look to windward as well as ahead—eh, captain?"

"Why, yes, sir," observed the sailor; "nobody can accuse you of not having kept your weather eye open."

"Ha, ha!" chuckled the merchant; "not a bad hit that, Master Harding. Never got much to windward of you though—eh?"

"Merely because you never tried," replied the captain. "I should have cut a poor figure if you had. It's been all plain sailing by the chart with us; and, thank God and my owners, I've no right to grumble. Let us have luck for about three more trips, and I don't say but Jack Harding may coil up. There's a snug house that I've my eye on at Blackbeath, the lease of which will be out about that time, and I have the promise of a refusal. Commands a fine view of the river."

"Ay, ay, all right," said Mr. Storer. "Old coachman likes smack o' the whip. Come and see you. Good madeira, eh?—sure of that."

Found something interesting in the paper, Sir William?"

"No news," replied the knight, "but here's a paragraph about a Bow Street examination, which is printed too small for me to read pleasantly at night, and so, if you'll give me leave, I'll put the paper in my pocket, and run it over in the morning."

"Ay, ay, do so," said Mr. Storer. "Droll dogs those reporters—make up a story—don't stick at trifles. Too bad sometimes, though. Ever had up at Bow Street, captain? Dare say you have—not lately though, I'll be bound. Cruised about in your time, though—eh?"

"Every dog has his day," replied the captain. "I got into a row at the theatre once, and hang me if ever I could find out what it was about. Too much wine was at the bottom of all, I believe. Lugged out a one pound note for the poor next morning, and paid a few shillings besides, and there was an end of it. It's twenty years ago, that. Heigho! how time passes!"

“Sad dog in your time!” said Mr. Storer. “Sailors ashore—cat in a pantry. Idle man, devil’s playfellow—don’t know what to be at—eh? All’s fish that comes to net. Times mended now, though. Rows sometimes at Oxford,—eh, Bernard? Know you were never at Bow Street. Proctors got hold of you sometimes, though—eh? Needn’t say anything—see it in your face—nothing very bad, dare say—” And then perceiving that his random shot had put our hero quite out of countenance, the good-tempered, but not unobservant merchant, passed on to some other subject; and after a little more unimportant chat, the party separated for the night.

As they drove home to Covent Garden, there was an unusual stiffness, and an air of thoughtfulness, about Sir William, which perplexed and rendered his nephew uneasy.

“I fear, my dear uncle,” said he, when they were seated before the fire, “that you have overfatigued yourself.”

“Why should you think so, sir?” asked the knight, somewhat sternly.

“Because you have scarcely spoken all the way from Russell Square,” replied Bernard.

“You know that I dislike talking,” said Sir William, “when one is rattling over the stones at a rate which prevents more than three parts of what is said from being audible. But allow me to ask whether you are not aware of some *other* reason sufficient to make me more thoughtful than usual?”

Our hero replied in the negative; and then his uncle, with extreme seriousness of manner, thus addressed him :

“You have struck me a heavy blow, sir, this evening. You and I are alone in the world, the sole individuals remaining of a family of unsullied name. In you I looked forward for the revival of its former dignity and importance, and, till now, I had no reason to doubt——”

“My dearest uncle,” exclaimed Bernard, “what can I have done?”

“It is an evil sign that you are not conscious of it!” groaned Sir William. “But, hear me. You know my detestation of every species of falsehood. You have heard me say, and now

I repeat, that I never knew any man, who was given to telling lies, worthy of the smallest confidence. My invariable rule from youth up to this day has been, whenever an individual has given a specimen of his facility in the art of deceit, from that moment to drop his acquaintance; and, sir, harsh as it may sound in your ears, not one single instance has occurred in the whole course of my life, in which I have not had some occasion, at a future period, to congratulate myself upon adhering strictly to this rule; knowing, as I do from experience, that the fabricators of plausible and false accounts in trifling matters, are not to be depended on in concerns of moment:—knowing this, sir, judge what I must feel at finding *you* among the number!”

Bernard had listened with increasing agitation. Many a time before had his uncle and he conversed upon the same topic; but always hitherto with a perfect accordance of sentiment, for it had been his rule likewise to break off all intimacy with those in whom he discerned a propensity to the low vice of lying, and, till a

certain period, as has been previously stated, his friends might boldly say of him, that "he had never been known to tell an untruth, even in jest."

Something has been already said of the mental alarm produced by his first lapse, as likewise of the uncomfortable feelings excited by several which followed: but, such is the force of habit, that when he gave a false reason to Miss Read for the marks on his hands, he felt not the smallest compunction, and the account was given with the ease and nonchalance of a practised adept.

This it was that so deeply impressed Sir William, who, in reply to something which our hero stammered forth about the "trifling nature of the thing," and that "it could not do any harm," and being "obliged to say something," sternly observed, "The words, sir, are of little consequence. The *fact* which distresses me, is *your* aberration from that strict line of truth which I never before doubted always governed your words. Your attempted defence on such paltry grounds moves me still

more. I feel utterly unable," he continued, with deep emotion, "utterly unable to converse longer upon this painful subject. Till this hour, rather would I have confided in your simple assertion, than on the oaths and bonds of other men—but we must sleep upon it. Farewell, sir, for the night!" and with these words, he retired to his chamber, leaving our hero to devise what means he might for extricating himself from this fresh embarrassment.

CHAPTER XIV.

As Bernard lay restless on his pillow, he upbraided himself for not having revealed to his uncle, in the first instance, the nature of the extraordinary gift which had been bestowed upon him. "But *now*," thought he, "such a step would be downright madness, since it must be followed by a confession of the thousand falsities which this accursed power has led me to be guilty of."

Then, as usual, whenever he had brought himself into any difficulty by the abuse of his invisible gift, he uttered imprecations against the giver, who had so readily come forward to grant his wish, in consequence of his own particular desire, nine times repeated.

This was certainly extremely ungrateful

towards the pallid auricular anointer; but somewhat similar is the manner in which the givers of extraordinary gifts among mankind are too generally rewarded.

In the morning, while our hero was waiting for his uncle's appearance at breakfast, he found the account of his own Bow Street affair in the paper of the day, copied *verbatim* from that of the preceding evening, and marked and acknowledged accordingly. But as the Journals were of opposite factions, that of the morning contained the following addition :

“Our readers will find, under our usual head of police reports, an extract from one of our contemporaries, with whom, notwithstanding that we differ ‘*toto cælo*’ in important matters, we have occasionally been content to join in a good-humoured way, and laugh at the exposure of the ridiculous pretensions of barbers’ clerks and men milliners to the character of ‘gentlemen.’ In the present instance, however, we cannot but feel unmingled disgust at the baseness of that mind, which, blinded by party spirit, could thus perversely construe an act of

genuine and disinterested philanthropy into a charge of interfering with the course of justice,' &c. We have no personal acquaintance with Sir W * * A * *, but we know his character well, and that it is 'above reproach;' and we can likewise tell our *soi-disant* well-informed contemporary, that 'the miscreant,' as he outrageously styles the person so ridiculously accused, was no more to be suspected of 'body snatching' than the Archbishop of Canterbury. As for what is said about 'a certain borough and so forth,' we merely remark, that the characters of the individuals alluded to form more than a sufficient guarantee for the preservation of what is so ridiculously called, 'The rights of the people of England:' but with which, in reality, they have no more concern than the man in the moon. The term of 'Parliamentary reform,' stuck at the end of the precious article referred to, is evidently a 'clap-trap,' an '*ad captandum vulgus*,' expected to *tell* well in the low beer-shops and public-houses, by the frequenters of which, we understand, the falling paper alluded to is now

principally supported. We now give the whole of the ‘mysterious affair’ in these words. A respectable countryman, a tenant of Sir W * * A * * came to town the day before yesterday, and having lost his way, and seeing a hackney-coach apparently unengaged, entered it without ceremony, and was immediately taken into custody on suspicion of being connected with the persons by whom it was really hired, and who, it seems, had got notice that the officers were on the watch, and had therefore decamped leaving behind them their booty, and dropping a bag of picklocks, &c. The ‘variety of watches and snuff-boxes’ turn out to be two of each kind, one being for the bearer’s own use, and the others purchased during the day on commission for the unlucky countryman’s friends. When brought to the office, a laudable delicacy prevented him from hazarding the name of his landlord in the presence of such a motley group as that by which he was surrounded; but when the worthy magistrate consented to hear what he had to say, he immediately requested that Sir W * * A * * might

be sent for, and the testimony of the worthy knight was such as would have rendered any farther detention of the innocent man a matter of folly and perversity on the part of the magistrate. This is the plain simple story, and if our contemporary is not satisfied with it, we refer him to the individual himself, who came to London on business, which he has now transacted, and returns by the coach this day to his own dwelling at A—— in Northamptonshire. We are really ashamed of the length into which this subject has drawn us, but we feel an honest indignation at these wanton attacks upon private character, and it is high time that the flimsy pretensions of a certain party to superior sources of intelligence should be exposed.”

The whole of what he read was extremely annoying to our hero, and much was perfectly unintelligible. The latter may be explained to the reader in a few words, by stating that George Burrows, the butcher, in consequence of the sudden increase of his capital, had resolved to extend his trade by sending

meat up to the London market, where it was of course necessary for him to come, in order to make some previous arrangement. Accordingly he mounted the coach, in the interior of which sate the Reverend Mr. Kenemall, who, very naturally for him, took an opportunity of inquiring what his parishioner's business might be in the metropolis, and when informed, he expressed his approbation of such industry, and wished him success. And with such valediction they separated at the inn, in Smithfield, at which the said coach put up. On the following day the rector dined with a party of gentlemen at the chambers of an old college friend, then residing in the Temple; and it so happened that he sate next to the editor of the paper from which we have just quoted. The apprehension of Burrows as a resurrectionist was spoken of, and Mr. Kenemall thought he knew the man, but when the circumstance of Sir William Audrey's interference was mentioned, all doubt was removed, and he stated that the accused was a parishioner of his, ignorant of the ways of London, whither he had

come on private business—that he was perfectly respectable in his station, a tenant on the Audrey estate—and other particulars more than sufficient to form a foundation for the paragraph in question.

Bernard had just finished his reading, when Sir William made his appearance, and they went to breakfast; but, as it regards the worthy knight's manner, or what he said, on that particular occasion, we feel the absolute necessity of being very brief, not because what he uttered was not worth repeating, for it was most excellent; but partly because we have given his sentiments of the preceding evening—and *principally* as we fear the reader might take refuge, by “skipping” from the infliction of the worthy old gentleman's earnest exhortations and advice to his nephew, the sole hope of his old age and his heir elect.

Be it imagined then that the uncle performed his duty by giving the nephew the benefit of his experience, and that the nephew listened with all the respectful impatience common to youth when enjoying the privilege of “a lecture,”

advice, "a jobation," or whatever other name they choose to call the invaluable counsel of their elders.

Sir William finished by observing, "And now Sir, having fully expressed my feelings, prejudices, fancies, or follies, be they what they may, on this subject, I mean not again to refer to it more than may be necessary. You have, I perceive, been reading the newspapers, and doubtless have seen the account of your Bow Street adventure and the luminous expositions attached to it?"

Bernard replied in the affirmative, and pointed out the additional paragraph of the morning, which Sir William perused, and then gravely putting up his spectacles, continued,

" 'Save me from my friends, and I will protect myself against my enemies !' is an old saying, and like most of its standing, founded on a close observation of the follies of mankind. The meddling finger of some half-informed, officious, would-be friend is visible here. But you may leave these things to me. I will set *them* to rights. All that you have to recollect is,

that the Storers must have read them ; and, when I am asked for an explanation, it shall be given in the words of plain, simple *truth*. I should certainly have preferred their knowing nothing of such a ridiculous affair ; but my friend the merchant is no fool, and, when the matter is properly explained, I have no doubt that it will afford him some amusement. For the other mode of accounting for certain appearances — why — pshaw ! — I have nothing more to say about it — that is your concern. If I should not see you again during the day, I hope you will enjoy yourself. I shall be much engaged the whole of the morning, and mean to dine at Sir Marmaduke's — therefore I shall return here to dress at a quarter before six — but I suppose you will dine in Russell Square."

In all that the good old knight said and did that morning there was an air of cold, offended dignity. Not once did he use the wonted term " Bernard," when addressing his nephew. It was always " Sir." And when he perceived that the youth was mortified and hurt, he still repressed the struggles of natural affection within,

and persevered, with the idea of making a salutary impression upon a mind which, he flattered himself, and was determined to hope, had taken but a single step in the paths of deceit.

His first call, after their separation, was at the office of the evening paper, where, with some difficulty, he obtained an interview with one of the co-proprietors, or co-editors, or co-incident-makers. It was sufficient, however, for Sir William to perceive that the individual into whose presence he was formally ushered, was evidently a person having authority in the gloomy, subdivided tenement, in which he occupied a subdivision, sitting in a library chair, before a table covered with papers, issuing his slips and mandates, and speaking in a manner befitting one of the great plural units of the day. The knight had never read a single page of Lavater, Gall, or Spurzheim; but experience had taught him to read somewhat of the characters of men, by a freemason-like intuitive glance, not to be acquired from books. Therefore did he perceive in the large face, uplifted brow, and "what's-your-business-sort of stare of the person before

him, most clearly written the word "Pomposo," upon which, like a skilful general at an unexpected movement of the enemy, his plan was instantly changed. Instead of complaining as he had intended, he now treated the mighty "we" personage with all possible deference, and spake of the paragraph as one of those trivial errors utterly unavoidable amid a multiplicity of business. All this had its due effect in producing a relaxation in the features of the occupier of the closet-like subdivision, who felt gratified at being treated with an air of equality by a gentleman of Sir William's rank and wealth.

"I am happy, Sir William," said he, "to find that you judge of us correctly. It is impossible for us, with the number of persons whom we employ, to avoid being led occasionally into errors. And yet it is strange in the present instance, for we pride ourselves in the accuracy of our police reports. However, only point out to me where we are wrong, and it shall be rectified. Of course, you will not object to our quoting you as our authority."

“As for that, my good sir,” said Sir William, forcing a laugh, “I think when I have told you the particulars of the case, you will agree with me that nothing of the kind can be necessary.” He then related who the supposed delinquent really was, how he had got into his ridiculous difficulty in consequence of taking too much wine, and that the name of Burrows was one assumed for the purpose of keeping his own out of the newspapers.

“It really is a very nonsensical affair,” observed the man in office, “and *we* should be content to drop it; but a morning paper has taken it up—and—upon my word, I do not see how we can submit to such scurrilous language as they have used without making some rejoinder, particularly as they have given an account of the affair which it seems is purely imaginary. What can the fellows mean, Sir William, by the ‘respectable countryman,’ your tenant?”

“I am quite as much at a loss as yourself on that head,” replied the knight. “I certainly have a tenant of that name in Northampton-

shire, and it was the recollection of him at the moment, which induced my nephew to borrow it; but I have no knowledge of his being in town, nor do I think it likely, as he is neither more nor less than our village butcher."

'This information evidently gave great delight to the regulator of the moveable types, who discerned in it an opportunity of ridiculing his opponent.

"There is one part of your article, sir," resumed Sir William, "on which we have not yet spoken, and which after all is, perhaps, the most important, as it touches upon a public question."

"I know what you allude to, Sir William," observed the co-concocter of intelligence, with a slow, mysterious bending of the head; "but I am *afraid* it will be useless for us to speak on *that* subject. Indeed, Sir William, to be candid with you, *that* is not my department. We are *very* strong on that point, and if the line of my duty permitted me to mention names, you would be surprised."

"I have no wish to pry into secrets," said

the knight, “ but self-justification requires me to state that to you, which I am confident, from the urbanity I have hitherto met with from you, you will not hesitate to represent in the proper quarter. The remark in question evidently alludes to Sir Marmaduke Bonus’s borough of Trevotain, and I certainly have reason to flatter myself that he would not be inattentive to my recommendation in case of a vacancy ; but I give you my word of honour as a gentleman, that if the nomination were placed in my hands this moment, I would not accept of it, either for my nephew or myself. I am too old to commence a parliamentary career, and he is too young, and his character not sufficiently settled. You and I may possibly differ in opinion upon some political questions, but nothing would induce me to render the smallest assistance towards procuring a seat in the house for any individual, even were he my own son, unless I was perfectly convinced of his fitness in every respect to perform the duties of a legislator. In the canvassing for votes among the proprietors of East India Stock, I shall most assuredly do

all I can for Sir Marmaduke Bonus, not *merely* because he is my friend, but because I have known him, and observed his conduct for many years, both in the east and in this country, and am firmly convinced that his knowledge and talents are precisely such as are necessary at the present moment. But that there may be no mistake relative to *my* motives, I shall call upon him this morning, and decline beforehand any sort of interest such as is alluded to, and which probably enough he may have contemplated to offer me."

The journalizer paid his visiter certain compliments on the liberality and disinterestedness of his opinions and conduct ; and then Sir William took leave, and repaired to the office of his officious and self-elected champion.

Vexed as the editor was at having been misled, when he fancied his intelligence came from the fountain-head, he scrupled not immediately to give the name and address of his informant, "The Reverend P. P. Kenemall, Green Dragon Inn, Bishopsgate Street;" and to that unfashionable quarter of the town, the knight ordered

himself to be driven, after having repeated to the gentlemen of the morning press what he had already said to his "contemporary" of the evening chronicles.

It was a painful sacrifice which the old gentleman felt himself called upon to make of Bernard's anticipated seat in parliament; but it was the result of cool deliberation during the preceding night, and he came to the decision, partly because the paragraphs alluded to must have the effect of drawing public attention towards all the parties concerned, but principally in consequence of the conviction that his nephew's character was not sufficiently settled to render it prudent that he should be placed in a situation where his integrity would probably be put to the severest test.

The conversation which he had that morning with the rector convinced him in the most disagreeable manner of the propriety of his conduct, for then he first became acquainted with the circumstance of our hero's having bribed George Burrows to put his name to a paper which he knew to be a lie.

Mr. Storer, it seemed, having made up his own mind to overlook the fault for the sake of the motive, kindly avoided mentioning that affair to Sir William, because he knew it would give him pain, and might produce a coolness between him and his nephew. Mr. Kenemall, however, saw the affair in a very different light, and spoke of the transaction as a proof of the young squire's goodness of heart; and, having once entered upon the subject of parish news, proceeded to state the provision made by Bernard for the five orphan grandchildren of poor old Martha.

All this was extremely perplexing and annoying to Sir William, who, although inclined to be charitable, could not approve of this sort of wholesale adoption of an entire family, when there were public institutions into which the children might have been received, by proper application and exertion, and where their morals and education would have been properly attended to. But the most painful part of his reflection was, that Bernard had never mentioned the subject to him, and therefore it was

too evident that the entire confidence which had hitherto existed between them was at an end. The more he thought, the more he felt hurt and embarrassed, and at length the worthy knight arrived at the same conclusion as that adopted by the young ladies, namely, that a great alteration had latterly taken place in our hero, and that there must be some cause for it. And what that cause was, he likewise determined to find out.

After leaving the rector, his next interview was with Mr. Storer at his private counting-house in the city. The obnoxious paragraphs were, of course, first disposed of, and the merchant, though sadly mortified at the idea of letting a seat in parliament slip through their fingers, agreed in the propriety of all that Sir William had done.

“So best, so best,” said he. “Folks all on the gape now — some other time, when all’s quiet. Bow Street business — very stupid not to look into coach first. No row though — no great harm — but don’t like that denying it — bad that — shouldn’t have expected that after

what you told me — hate a liar. Don't do so often, hope — once too often though — done so at first, cut the connexion — too late now, I'm afraid — poor Ally ! Keep an eye on him, however — look sharp now — saw there was something last night. Very odd ! — not as he used to be — can't think what's come to him — find it out though."

" My dear friend," said Sir William, " I am as much perplexed as yourself. Never, till last night, have I known him to be guilty of anything like falsehood or prevarication. There must not, however, be any secrets between *us*, and I have now something to tell you respecting him, which I have just learnt, and which, I dare say, you will be as much surprised as myself to hear." He then related the substance of the rector's communication.

" Five children !" exclaimed Mr. Storer. " Mad, Sir ! — boy's mad ! Playing ducks and drakes with money ! Can't be his own ? — not old enough for that yet. Never heard of Asylum — Philanthropic — Blue-coat School, eh ? Care of the rascally butcher too, that killed the

poor woman ! — worse than all — knows he's a rascal — told him so myself — never consent to the marriage till the scoundrel's off the estate — don't know whether shall then — see about it — have all explained. Sorry for you, Sir William — respect you — can't help it. Dine with me to-day ? — in a family way — have nobody else. Suppose he'll come — talk all over after dinner — make all clear — no secrets now — hate 'em pretty near as much as lies."

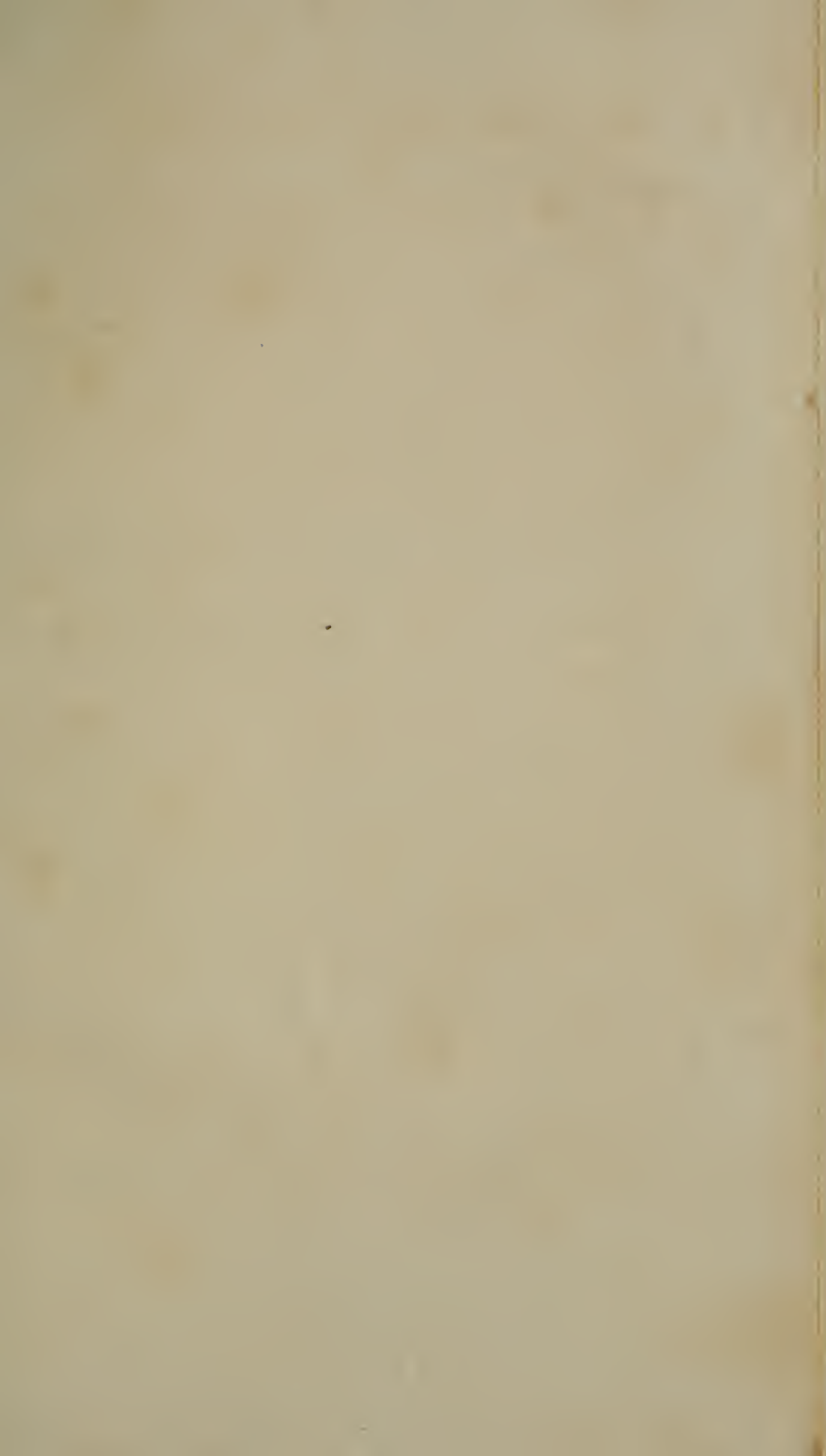
The knight's previous engagement with Sir Marmaduke prevented him from accepting this invitation ; but the merchant said the young gentleman should not escape on that account, for he would talk to him himself.

Thus, in consequence of the gratification of his ridiculous wish, our hero was already in disgrace, or had become an object of suspicion to all his friends.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

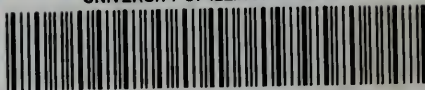
7



116

1151-

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 069044532